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THE WASTE LAND IN THE MISOGYNOUS TRADITION

by

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To Athena

ABSTRACT

T. S. Eliot's Waste Land is dominated by a multi-form female figure who embodies what the poet saw as the "futility and anarchy" of contemporary history. But Eliot is by no means the first male writer to represent the ills of civilization in the image of degenerate woman, nor does he create, *ex nihilo*, a female figure unique to his work. His female figure is a complex symbol who derives from a misogynous tradition that is deeply rooted in the "whole of the literature of Europe from Homer," and she is the culmination of a long line of diminished and disfigured literary women. The "shape and significance" of Eliot's vision of the deterioration of modern life cannot be fully appreciated until this female figure is seen in the context of the tradition out of which she comes. This thesis examines Eliot's female figure in relation to various aspects of his inheritance.

Chapter I investigates the female archetype underlying the "incidental symbolism" and the fragmentary imagery of The Waste Land. Taking its cue from Eliot's introductory remarks in his "Notes" to the poem, it first considers the feminine presence in the universal quest for rebirth that is described in Jessie L. Weston's From Ritual to Romance and James Frazer's Golden Bough. It goes on to identify the Sibyl of the epigraph as a corrupt version of this archetypal presence and to demonstrate the essential degeneracy of all of the women in the poem insofar as they "melt into" her.

Chapter II examines the "mythic method" of The Waste Land, the

method by which Eliot manipulates a consistent "parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity," and, by citation and allusion, brings into his work such degenerate female figures as Ovid's mutilated Philomela, Petronius' withered Sibyl and St. Augustine's temple harlot. It also examines Eliot's method of disfiguring mythic women of the literary past in order to characterize a decadent present. It traces the "degenerate descendents" of such heroic figures as Dido, Cleopatra and Elizabeth I.

Chapter III reviews the female figure of The Waste Land in the closer context of the misogynous literary tradition of the nineteenth century, especially that of the French decadent-symbolists, whose influence on his work Eliot so often acknowledged. In them, and especially in the figures of "Venus" and "L'Eternel Féminin" which emerge in their work, Eliot found ancestral versions of his Waste Land woman. The "constant vituperations of the female" that Eliot inherits from this period culminate in his caricature of Fresca, which appears in the drafts of The Waste Land. Here, as Joyce remarked, "T. S. Eliot ends the idea of poetry for ladies."*

Finally, Chapter IV addresses a theological context for the Waste Land women. Eliot's inheritance includes traditional theological prejudices about female sexuality. The voices of the prophets and saints echo throughout The Waste Land, making their appeal to the "Son of man" and enunciating a profound aversion to the "horror" of the "unmoral" and natural woman. This chapter examines the traditional antithesis between

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*Quoted by Sandra Gilbert in "In Yeats's House: The Death and Resurrection of Sylvia Plath," a lecture delivered at a conference in Facets of Feminist Criticism, the Annual Seminar of the English Association of the Department of English of McMaster University, October, 1983.

the soul-searching male and the physical female as it appears both in *The Waste Land* and in Eliot's earlier poetry. It considers the corrupting power of his Magna Mater and the collapse of his "Magnus Martyr" in the light of comparative religious studies, which outline an evolutionary conflict between "inferior" matriarchy and "superior" patriarchy.

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CHAPTER I

ARCHETYPE: "SO ALL THE WOMEN ARE ONE WOMAN"

Eliot relies on a notion of archetype as the primary unifying strategy in The Waste Land. In his notes to the poem, he writes:

> Just as the one-eyed merchant seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias.

The idea of melting or transforming characters is a familiar one, recalling the mythic method of Ovid's Metamorphoses. But at the same time as Eliot insists on their dissolving identities, he implies by his assertion that "all . . . are one," an essential relation between them, an informing and underlying principle, or archetype. In The Waste Land, he presents many female characters, many more female characters than male, and the range of characterization seems so great as to both invite and resist this archetypal notion. While the one-eyed merchant from Smyrna, the Phoenician Sailor and Ferdinand of Naples have in common one obvious feature--all are sea-travellers--there is nothing so obvious that links the women together. How do figures as seemingly disparate as the Sibyl, the hyacinth girl, Madame Sosostris and the typist "melt" into one another?

Furthermore, how do male and female characters, once melted into their respective archetypes, "meet in Tiresias"? Eliot points to him as the central "personage" of the poem, uniting even sexual differences and giving voice and perspective to both men and women. "Tiresias," he writes,

> although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character,' is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. . . . What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem.

Eliot implies that men and women share the same world view as they meet in this single "personage." Yet, the poem demonstrates a precisely contrary proposition, that the sexes are mutually antagonistic and locked in a hopeless stalemate. Elizabeth Schneider suspects that Eliot takes the notion of unifying "personage" too far and that his claim about Tiresias "may have been a slight ex post facto overstatement arising from nervousness about the poem's formal unity."[1] "Nevertheless," she continues,

> as a mythological personage Tiresias is a naturally symbolic figure for the theme: he who has been both man and woman has been all things and can know all things. And Eliot's poem is its question and answer concerning the universal, or at least Western, future. The identity of all the men and all the women, however, to which Eliot's note points, is only broadly symbolic; it has to do with the theme and with unity of culture, not with any narrow consideration of technical point of view. . . .[2]

Tiresias, then, in some sense, is an archetype of archetypes, a thematic strategy if not a unified "point of view." But before considering his "androgynous" identity, I propose to examine the female archetype of which, we are told, all female characters are variations.

The term "archetype" is now commonly associated with Jungian psychology. It is not a term Eliot uses nor does he acknowledge Jung in his notes. Whether he read Psychology of the Unconscious (published in 1912, and translated in 1916), which introduces the archetype of rebirth, is uncertain but it is likely, since Eliot had been educated in Frazer and Freud at Harvard and was widely read in psychology, religion and anthropology.[3] Some critics argue that a Jungian reading of the poem is essential to its interpretation. W. F. Jackson Knight, for instance, writes that, "the expositions of . . . Mr. T. S. Eliot . . . and others, seem to require for their reconciliation and completion the psychological theory of Jung."[4] Others, like Elizabeth Drew, offer a Jungian interpretation with the qualification that "there is no need to accept Jung's theory" to account for the appearance of an archetype in The Waste Land. "Eliot," she writes,

> knew the sources of all his symbols and used them all with the conscious manipulation of the artist. His mind had already absorbed the whole literary and cultural tradition of Europe, as well as a great deal of Asiatic religion and philosophy.[5]

Some critics, like Grover Smith, argue for both a psychological and an anthropological reading in order to comprehend the idea of a female archetype. Smith writes,

> to suggest that in fact all of Eliot's feminine characters are in the symbolic sense one and the same, that they are recurrent manifestations of a single ideal, fluctuating it is true, through poetic and metaphysical ironies, between the symbolism of life and the symbolism of death, involves not only Jungian and Freudian psychology but modern anthropology as well.[6]

In his notes to The Waste Land, Eliot acknowledges indebtedness to the anthropologists, Jessie L. Weston and Sir James Frazer, specifically to their studies of the Grail legend and the vegetation ceremonies. At the time he was writing The Waste Land, British anthropology was monopolized by the Cambridge school which was industriously uncovering connections between religion, myth and ancient cult ritual.[7] Its method of research was comparative or, one could say, archetypal. Frazer and Weston both worked from the idea of a universal myth in their cross-cultural and trans-historic studies. Eliot may have derived his notion of archetype and, more specifically, his archetypal female character from them. Following the poet's own suggestion then, I propose to turn first to these sources to elucidate this aspect of the poem.

Frazer outlines the universal myth of the Dying God originally celebrated in the vegetation cults of Adonis, Attis and Osiris and later manifested in such religions as the cult of Dionysos, Mithraism and Christianity. He treats Adonis, Attis and Osiris as essentially one deity personifying the annual rise and fall of the harvest and also as one cult, whose ritual magic was thought to aid the regeneration of the god. "The substantial similarity of their mythical character," he writes,

> justifies us in treating of them together. All three apparently embodied the powers of fertility in general and vegetation in particular. All three were believed to have died and risen again from the dead; and the divine death and resurrection of all three were dramatically represented at annual festivals, which their worshippers celebrated with alternate transports of sorrow and joy, of weeping and exultation. The natural phenomena thus mythically conceived and mythically represented were the great changes of the seasons, especially the most striking and impressive of all, the decay and revival of vegetation; and the intention of the sacred dramas was to refresh and strengthen, by sympathetic magic, the failing energies of nature. . . .[8]

Adonis, Attis and Osiris may, then, be conceived of as a single expression of the natural cycle of life. But while the god rose and fell with the harvest, the goddess signified the omnipotent Earth Mother from whom all life sprang and to whom it returned. Frazer presents the male deity as a primordial Magnus Martyr, complementary to the female deity, Magna Mater. He continues:

> But the three gods did not stand by themselves. The mythical personification of nature, of which all three were in at least one aspect the products, required that each of them should be

> coupled with a goddess, and in each case it appears that originally the goddess was a more powerful and important personage than the god. At all events, it is always the god rather than the goddess who comes to a sad end, and whose death is annually mourned.[9]

Ritual ceremonies were supposed to enact the life of the deities and to serve as "sympathetic magic" to inspire divine coupling and fertility. Male sacrifice and burial dramatized the life of the divine consort who annually entered and emerged from the womb of the Earth Mother (the soil or the sea). It was the life source of sacrificed men that was thought to be embodied in the upthrusting red and purple flowers of spring. "What more natural than to imagine," writes Frazer, "that the violets and the hyacinths, the roses and the anemones, sprang from their dust, were empurpled or incarnadined by their blood, and contained some portion of their spirit?"[10]

Frazer, then, presents a male archetype with a "vegetative" character, marked by the alternate loss and gain of his generative power. This character was mimed by priests or kings or male votaries who ritually coupled with the goddess (personified by the daughters of kings as well as priestesses) and who performed some kind of sacrifice. Ritual castration, death and burial signified the loss of virility and the withdrawal of the god each winter into the earthly womb where he fertilized the Magna Mater and caused himself to be reborn. "We may conjecture," writes Frazer,

> that it was on the Day of Blood . . . that the novices sacrificed their virility. Wrought up to the highest pitch of religious excitement they dashed the severed portions of themselves against the image of the cruel goddess. These broken instruments of fertility were afterwards reverently wrapt up and buried in the earth or in the subterranean chambers sacred to Cybele, where, like the offering of blood, they may

> have been deemed instrumental in recalling Attis to life and hastening the general resurrection of nature, which was then bursting into leaf and blossom in the vernal sunshine.[11]

He conjectures further that cult sacrifice involved the ritual hanging of a living man. "In old days," Frazer speculates,

> the priest who bore the name and played the part of Attis at the spring festival of Cybele was regularly hanged or otherwise slain upon the sacred tree. . . . this barbarous custom was afterwards mitigated into the form in which it is known to us in later times, when the priest merely drew blood from his body under the tree and attached an effigy instead of himself to its trunk.[12]

While Frazer's male archetype personified the annual rise and fall of vegetation, his female archetype personified the conservative energies of nature, both constructive and destructive. Priestesses or other female votaries performed ritual coupling (or sacrificed their hair instead), led the procession of mourning and tended the "gardens of Adonis." This latter, highly specialized role signified female agricultural authority and the ruling power of the Magna Mater or natural law over masculine vitality and spirit. Frazer summarizes the character of these gardens:

> Perhaps the best proof that Adonis was a deity of vegetation, . . . is furnished by the gardens of Adonis, as they were called. These were baskets or pots filled with earth, in which wheat, barley, lettuces, fennel and various kinds of flowers were sown and tended for eight days, chiefly or exclusively by women. Fostered by the sun's heat, the plants shot up rapidly, but having no root they withered as rapidly away, and at the end of eight days they were carried out with the images of the dead Adonis, and flung with them into the sea. . . .[13]

All of these mythic elements appear, recast, in The Waste Land; and all of them are intensely relevant in an examination of Eliot's Waste Land women. But before I proceed to investigate Eliot's poetic adaptation of Frazer's archetypes, I should point out that examination of the archetype is in itself by no means an original critical procedure. Cleanth Brooks studied the poem in relation to its anthropological sources as early as 1939, in Modern Poetry and the Tradition. Northrop Frye, Grover Smith and J. B. Vickery have since considered the poem in the light of archetypal criticism; and Elizabeth Drew and P. W. Martin have interpreted by using a Jungian notion of archetypes. What constitutes originality in the present study is the particular attention given to the female archetype.

Frazer's vegetative god makes his first appearance in the opening passage of The Waste Land with the revival of the "lilacs" from dormant "dried tubers." "Through the lilacs themselves," observes J. B. Vickery, "we recall the dying and reviving god, Attis, whose return from the dead was foreshadowed in the appearance of lilac-colored blossoms at the very beginning of spring." The spring season is "cruellest," perhaps, because it was a "cruel goddess," according to Frazer, who demanded the sacrifice and burial of her consort to make her fertile. Cult rituals were held in the spring and at harvest and, in both instances, death and resurrection were celebrated.[14] The first seven lines of the poem describe the natural cycle--birth, "breeding," and death--which vegetation ceremonies dramatized as a fertility charm. April also signifies the season of the death and resurrection of Christ whom Frazer links to Adonis: "we may surmise," he writes, "that the Easter celebration of the dead and risen Christ was grafted upon a similar celebration of the dead and risen Adonis."[15] The title of part I, it should be recalled, refers to the office of "The Burial of the Dead."

Cult ritual may provide the substance of the drama in the

"Hyacinths" scene. Hyacinths, notes Frazer, symbolized the reincarnation of the Dying God, Hyacinth, who was an aboriginal, "chthonic," deity and consort to the goddess before becoming the fatally wounded lover of Apollo in classical myth.[16] The "garden" is, perhaps, an allusion to the "gardens of Adonis." The "hyacinth girl" may be seen in the archetypal female role of tending the sacramental flowers, which are clearly phallic symbols, as Grover Smith observes, "the spike-shaped blossoms representing the slain god Hyacinth."[18] The man, in this scene, looks into the "heart of light" just as the lilacs, representing Attis, are reawakened to life, "bursting into leaf and blossom in the vernal sunshine." He is, however, "neither/ Living nor dead," indicating that he has not yet experienced resurrection but has only possessed a hopeful vision.

This scene connects with the last scene in part I which also features a garden and a ritual death. Like the offering of the Hyacinths, "last year" and "this year" the ceremonious burial of the effigy appears to be an annual rite. The "sudden frost" of "this year," like the suspended present moment in the "Hyacinths" scene, suggests the failure of the ritual to generate resurrection. It is a year later and both Stetson and the man in the hyacinth garden identify with the dormant life of wintering vegetation--the living dead.

The lilacs _do_, however, manage to breed "out of the dead land," signifiying an antithetical situation in which the physical nature of man appears to rematerialize without the concomitant revitalization of his spirit. His spiritual "roots" are "dull" or shallow like the roots in the "gardens of Adonis" and only feebly stirred, perhaps numbed, by the routine of natural life.

"Stetson" emerges from a crowded procession which has, apparently, lost its religious orientation and is caught up in the daily traffic to and from the city's commercial center. Ritual has been supplanted by a ghastly routine and the "dead sound of the final stroke of nine" is but a haunting, hollow echo of Christ's ninth hour on the cross. The ninth hour also alludes to the critical moment in the ritual of Osiris when the effigy "which had been made and deposited [in the grave] the year before was removed and placed upon the boughs of the sycamore" symbolizing resurrection.[19] Failing to pay tribute to this vital sign, the inhabitants of the city are "neither/ Living nor dead" but suspended in a spiritual nether world.

While the man in the garden fails to experience resurrection, the woman fails to transform him. There is no female role in Easter celebrations equivalent to that of the temple priestess, although ritual lamentation derives from the vegetation ceremonies where women were "attired as mourners, with streaming hair and bared breasts."[20] The hyacinth girl's hair is "wet," signifying, perhaps, her mourning for the dead or emasculate Hyacinth and, at the end of the poem, there appears an image of "maternal lamentation" which alludes, ambiguously, to the sorrowful mother of the dying Christ and the Magna Mater mourning for the "Hanged God," Attis. But the female role of portraying a sad and "cruel goddess" is not complemented by one that is nurturing or regenerating. The priestess is shown tending her gardens only in her destructive role, receiving the uprooted hyacinths or, like Isis with her "Dog" Anubis, digging up the corpse of Osiris before it has had a chance to "bloom."[21] She recalls him to life, that is, to the surface of life, to the "vernal sunshine," which is physically envigorating, but she is not "sympathetic" to his spiritual needs.

"Phlebas the Phoenician" may be the holder of the Tarot card, the "drowned Phoenician Sailor." He may also personify Adonis, the Dying God, who, it was believed, could be charmed into rebirth by enacting a regenerative sea-change. But Phlebas' journey of death-in-life seems to be suspended. He appears in "The Burial of the Dead" with his fellow, Stetson, in the metropolitan underworld of the living dead and he re-appears in "Death by Water" in the sea womb of the Magna Mater, apparently in a state of miscarriage. The cults of Adonis would, customarily, fling an effigy into the sea at Alexandria to be carried by Mediterranean currents to Byblos where it would be jubilantly received, signifying the resurrection. Phlebas, however, has been submerged for a "fortnight" with no sign of dry land and resuscitation. As Earth Mother, the archetypal female of The Waste Land seems to be either too dry or too wet, breeding only a "little life" and choking the spirit of the archetypal man.

Finally, Frazer's "Hanged God" appears in the "character" of the Hanged Man (on the Tarot card), representing both Attis and Christ. He reappears in the opening passage of part V as "He who was alive [but] is now dead," in a scene which suggests, at once, the festivals of the cults and the procession from the Garden of Gesthemane. He also reappears in the hooded figure on the "white road" which Eliot associates with the road on which the disciples journeyed to Emmaus. No female figure emerges in the poem to symbolize Frazer's archetypal female as clearly as the "hyacinth girl."

* * * *

Eliot expresses, in particular, his indebtedness to the anthropology of Jessie L. Weston. "Not only the title," he writes, in the "Notes,"

> but the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem were suggested by [her] book on the Grail legend: From Ritual to Romance (Cambridge). Indeed, so deeply am I indebted, Miss Weston's book will elucidate the difficulties of the poem much better than my notes can do. . . .

Through a comparative or archetypal method, Weston's study discloses the source of the Grail myth in cult ritual. It begins by outlining a "uniformity" of the legends of Gawain, Perceval and Galahad, which, she argues, "assures us of the essential identity of the tradition underlying various forms."[21] This "tradition" is identified by the archetypal quest of a potential hero-saviour to restore to health and vigour a king suffering from infirmity and, with him, the kingdom whose prosperity is related directly to his health and which has fallen to waste and the ravages of war. As archetype or universal myth, the quest provides the unifying principle of a tradition that is not only synchronous, underlying various forms and characters of Grail legend, but also diachronous, dating back to a pre-Christian source in the vegetation ceremonies of Adonis and Attis. Weston bases this conjecture upon certain primary parallels:

> . . . the central figure is either a dead knight . . . or a wounded king . . . when wounded the injury corresponds with that suffered by Adonis and Attis.
>
> Closely connected with the wounding of the king is the destruction which has fallen on the land, which will be removed when the king is healed. . . . we are face to face with the dreaded calamity which it was the aim of the Adonis ritual to avert, the temporary suspension of all the reproductive energies of Nature.[22]

In particular, she notes the appearance of the "weeping women" in the Grail legend: they behave, she observes, "precisely as did the classical mourners for Adonis--'They sob wildly all night long.'"[23]

The cause of the maidens' grief is the wounded king, or dead knight, who is the "central figure" of the myth, who is really alive and dead, suffering from the loss of his generative powers. "He is not merely a deeply symbolic figure," writes Weston,

> but the essential centre of the whole cult, a being semi-divine, semi-human, standing between his people and land, and the unseen forces which control their destiny. If the Grail story be based upon a Life ritual the character of the Fisher King is of the very essence of the tale. . . .[24]

He is a later, Christian adaptation of the dying vegetation god, though his particular infirmity and his essential link with the land identifies him, she argues, more closely with Adonis or Attis than with Christ. The general title of "Fisher King" finds an immediate source in Christian symbolism, "the Icthys anagram, as applied to Christ, the title 'Fishers of Men' bestowed upon the Apostles, the Papal ring of the Fisherman. . . ."[25] But, Weston points out, "the Fish is a Life symbol of immemorial antiquity, and . . . the title Fisher has, from earliest ages, been associated with Deities who were held to be specially connected with the origin and preservation of life."[26] She adds that "the Fish was sacred to those deities who were supposed to lead men back from the shadows of death to life" and refers to both Adonis and the (Phrygian) Magna Mater in this context.[27]

From Ritual to Romance concentrates its focus on the "esoteric" purpose of cult ritual and Grail symbolism. Drew observes that "[Eliot's] inspiration is a book about the immemorial antiquity of the search for union with the source of inner vitality."[28] The discussion of Fish symbolism uncovers the hidden, pagan elements in a Christian myth and, in the elaboration of her thesis, Weston demonstrates the ways in which a legend symbolizing the purgation and resurrection of the soul has its religious roots in "fertility" ritual.

Weston's argument is historical as well as archetypal. To establish the essential connection between the vegetation myths and the Grail legends she turns to the "mystery religions," a development in the history of ritual which emphasized spiritual as much as natural regeneration and instituted an elaborate scheme of "initiation" for securing it. The early vegetation myths, writes Drew (in a summary of Weston's position),

> developed later into the 'mystery religions,' which linked the ideas of death and resurrection in the natural world with that of a parallel process in the world of spirit. Membership in the religious body was prefaced by initiation rites, which . . . went beyond any mere external ceremony. Miss Weston thinks the candidates enacted some symbolic rite of death and resurrection, involving stern tests of physical and mental endurance, which, if successful, led the initiate to a sense of union with the life-principle itself.[29]

While Weston emphasizes the mysteries or the "esoteric" initiation, Frazer neglects them and stresses instead the external ceremony and material purpose of ritual, which, from his late Victorian and classicist perspective, he denounces as superstitious and amoral. Weston's research complements Frazer's, which "dealt with the public side of the cult" and discovers that,

> in the immediate pre- and post-Christian era these cults were considered not only most potent factors for assuring the material prosperity of land and folk, but were also held to be the most appropriate vehicle for imparting the highest religious teaching. The Vegetation deities, Adonis-Attis . . . were the chosen guides to the knowledge of, and union with, the supreme Spiritual Source of Life. . . .[30]

This different emphasis significantly alters the anthropological image of the male archetype; but it also alters the female archetype, for the mysteries honored the Magna Mater as spiritual Guide and "Genesis." Frazer points only to the terrestrial nature and "cruel" character of the goddess, and he sensationalizes the ritual role of women as "harlotry" and "incest."

Weston discovers the esoteric meaning of the cults through the Hermetic writings of Christian mystics. Through them she learns that mystery ritual entailed a "double initiation, the lower, into the mysteries of generation, i.e., of physical life; the higher, into the Spiritual Divine Life, where man is made one with God."[31]

The Grail myth, apparently, reflects this "double initiation." The presentation of the "Grail symbols," the cup and dish (or stone) and the lance and sword, the female and male "sex symbols," signifies the lesser initiation. The Grail knight, who plays essentially the same role as a candidate for initiation, is expected to ask questions regarding the meaning of these symbols. Failure to do so indicates a devastating ignorance in life generation, which, in turn, disqualifies him from the greater mystery of spiritual generation. The "Mystic Meal" derives not only from the Christian sacrament of the Eucharist, but also from the Mystery ritual of the "feast of Hilario" in which the "Mother of the Gods" initiates the "way of salvation." It signifies the greater initiation or communion. The "Feeding Vessel" or Grail chalice is "in some mysterious way "connected with this meal and symbolizes the higher generative powers of the female. The restoration of the king and his lands signifies full initiation and the successful union of the hero-saviour with the vital sources of Life.

Weston does not examine the pre-Christian mysteries directly but rather their synthesis and transformation through Gnostic mysticism.

It was, according to Weston, this heretical Christianity plus an underground pagan folk culture that carried the "cult of the Magna Mater" into the age of Medieval Romance. Early Church Fathers condemned the Gnostics particularly for their subscription to this cult and sought to abolish all traces of the older "Life" religions by, first, supplanting the omnipotent goddess with an absolute god. The Gnostics absorbed the ritual of Adonis-Attis into Christianity through the central doctrine of the "Mystery of Man" which treated the central figures of both religions as mythic equivalents. The Dying God of the vegetation cults is replaced by the avatar, the

> "doctrine of the Man, the Heavenly Man, the Son of God, who descends and becomes a slave of the Fate Sphere: the Man who, though originally endowed with all power, descends into weakness and bondage, and has to win his freedom, and regain his original state."[32]

While the Gnostics observed the "Gnosis of God," the "Logos" of Christ and the "Myth of Man"--the "Son of Man"--they also observed the eros and Genesis of the Magna Mater: "'it is Aphrodite who is in love with [Adonis] and desires Soul so-called, and Aphrodite is Genesis. . . .'"[33] Her role in the "Mystery of Generation" is no less essential than the masculine or patriarchal role although her Nature is sharply distinguished from his Soul. Weston quotes from the Hermetic writings:

> . . . if the Mother of the Gods emasculates Attis she too regarding him as the object of her love, it is the Blessed Nature above of the super-Cosmic and Aeonian spaces which calls back the masculine power of Soul to herself.[34]

From Weston's study emerges another image of female archetype: a vital source of love and inspiration; she is a "Blessed Nature" which generates and receives Soul just as she generates and receives life. The

Grail chalice symbolizes this capacity. And the Grail Bearer personifies it.

Weston points out the "prominent position assigned to women in the Grail myth" which seemingly contradicts the orthodox Christian tradition of subordinating or undermining the divine and priestly and natural female. This phenomenon is partly explained by the connection of Grail Romance with the vegetation cults and the mystery tradition: the "weeping women" derive from the mourners of Adonis, and the sacred Vessel from the mystic interpretation of the Magna Mater as a blessed receptacle of the Soul. But neither of these sources, as Weston would say, "satisfactorily" elucidates "the introduction of a female Grail Messenger, or the fact that . . . it is invariably a maiden who directs the hero on his road to the Grail castle, or reproaches him for his failure there."[35]

Here, I propose to turn to the "modern anthropology" of W. F. Jackson Knight. His study, Cumaean Gates, post-dates The Waste Land by fourteen years, so that it cannot be considered as a source of inspiration, but it may nevertheless help to elucidate this "prominent position" of the female figure in the Grail legend and, in turn, her archetypal character in the poem. First of all Knight outlines fully the mythic appearance of the Grail women:

> There are many guides to [the Grail Temple], not all of them reliable; but the chief guide is a woman called the Grail Messenger (Kundry in Wagner), who is sometimes a hideous old hag and sometimes a lovely young girl. She is found usually by water, and near the Castle entrance, both before and after the visits of the questers. She is also, often, the bearer of the Grail, whether a Cup or a Stone; and she ultimately urges the hero to the quest or warns him from it. When he fails, she upbraids him for not passing the necessary tests. When he succeeds, she becomes his bride, and changes from ugliness to beauty.[36]

In his study of Eliot's female archetype, Grover Smith refers to Knight, as well as to Frazer and Weston, but his interpretation of the poem emphasizes these various anthropological sources, inconsistently. He connects the hyacinth girl to the Grail bearer by drawing upon Frazer's archetype:

> She is the Grail-bearer, the maiden bringing love. As in the legends, he has met her in a place of water and flowers, the Hyacinth Garden. The function of the Grail-bearer is dual: first, she directs the quester to the place of his initiation or blames him for his failure there; second, she appears in the castle and bears the Grail into the great hall. It is she whom, if his quest is completed, he marries; she would be in Frazer's terms the consort of the wounded and resurrected god, and she universally appears in proximity to the water symbol.[37]

Here, Smith points to the female role in the ritual of "double initiation," which, however, Frazer does not account for in his "exoteric" study of cult religion. Turning from Frazer to Knight, Smith interprets this ritual female role in view of the Sibylline mysteries--one of the subjects of Knight's book. "Since The Waste Land employs the primordial imagery of death and rebirth in accordance with the Grail legend," he writes, "the sibyl belongs to the machinery of initiation in the poem; appearing in one of the Grail romances, she links the medieval legend to classical myth."[38] In an article entitled, "T. S. Eliot's Lady of the Rocks," Smith makes explicit the archetypal relation between Sibyl and Grail bearer:

> The quest pattern, wherever found, requires three characters--the quester, the sibyl (personating the fertility goddess), and the god. In the Hellenic mysteries the sibyl instructs the initiate before he enters the maze or labyrinth where he hopes to find the god of fertility and rebirth. In the Grail legend she is both old and young: before the quester enters the Grail Castle a crone accosts him and warns him not to fail in his test, and later, after he has reached the Fisher King (i.e. the divinity), she appears as the young Grail maiden. Her

> importance lies in the fact that she is both an efficient and final cause of the quest: it is she who inspires the quester, and it is she whose hand he seeks when he has succeeded.[39]

Knight studies the Sibylline mysteries and, in particular, the labyrinth or "maze ritual" as it appears in myth and literature--and, specifically, as it appears in Homer's Odyssey, Virgil's Aeneid, the Grail Romances, Dante's Divine Comedy and Shakespeare's Tempest, all of which contribute to the "incidental symbolism" of The Waste Land (and all of which, except Homer, are referred to in the notes). Like Weston, Knight points to the symbolic roots of the Grail myth in a mystery tradition though the tradition, here, is pre-Christian. He, too, finds certain "primary parallels," linking the Grail Castle or Chapel Perilous with the cave of initiation, and the "obstacles" within and without the castle, with the labyrinth. The Grail procession which moves "round and round, to and fro, in and out" of the Castle hall, chambers and corridors may be linked with the Eleusinian procession on its "blind march" through the labyrinth.[40]

The mystery Knight describes is not embodied in the "Son of man," but in the legendary female guide and her labyrinth. She, originally, is the hero of the underworld, surviving death to lead the initiate (personifying the Dying God) into the womb of the Earth Mother where he would learn the secrets of the grave and experience communion with the Life source itself. As the male deity changed from a vegetation myth to an absolute god in the evolution of the mystery tradition, the quester (who is, apparently, always male) appeared more prominently as hero, and the quest, itself, took on a spiritual rather than a sexual character. Eventually, the "maze ritual" acquired a moral purpose and the labyrinthine journey became a passage through the "purgatorial wilderness" or a "Descent into Hell."[41]

Knight unearths the origin of the Sibylline mysteries and traces their development into the Classical and Christian tradition, beginning with the explanation that,

> the principle of initiation, that is, birth into a new life by ritual . . . was evolved from a very simple myth-ritual pattern of birth and death, until the exalted spiritual conceptions of the Eleusinian mysteries, Vergil, and Dante were attained. Fundamentally, the myths concern new birth by entry again into earth, the universal mother. That is why caves are so important.[42]

Knight stresses the "chthonic" character of the Sibyl, who was originally the voice of the Earth Mother and guardian of her underworld (all Sibyls descend, perhaps, from Sibylla, the ancient prophetess of Cybele)[43] before becoming Apollo's oracle at Delphi. "Sibyls were not purely Apolline," writes Knight, "but belonged to the earth in their own right . . . [as] prophetic personalities attached to caves and in communication with powers of earth."[44] Sibyls belong to the earth and, in particular, to caves and water--the geomorphic symbolism of the Earth Mother's womb and birth waters.[45] Cave entrances signify the Maternal orifices, both "mouth" and "vagina," and the earth surrounding the entrance to Sibylline caves is often red, signifying the "very blood of the earth mother."[46] The cave body signifies the womb with its labyrinthine interior. Knight discovers in The Odyssey "the 'cave of Eileithyia,' the goddess of birth and also of death, clearly recalling a cult of the primeval goddess from whom all come and to whom all return."[47] Most often, Sibylline caves are sea grottos or mountain caverns enclosing springs or rivers. They are always proximal to water, which swirling or cascading in stony chambers produced the resounding echoes mythically likened to a deep, maternal voice. Knight speculates that Calypso, the cave nymph in The Odyssey, is a later manifestation of the maternal cave. She "prophesies to Odysseus," which is her Sibylline function and her name, "Calypso," meaning "she who hides the dead in the earth," proves her "chthonic," Earth Mother origin. "Mazes are often found by the sea," observes Knight, "because a maze ritual was performed by sailors, who putting to sea, were going from the realm of life to the realm of death, and therefore guarded themselves by entering it ceremoniously through the doors of the 'house of death,' the labyrinth."[46] The maze ritual enacted the death-in-life journey over maternal waters, functioning as "sympathetic magic" to secure the sailors' way.

As the Sibylline mysteries evolved, the maze ritual became more elaborate and the labyrinth, itself, acquired a more complicated structure --in myth and literature, as well as in actual architecture. The cave was replaced by a hall or a palace (such as Knossòs) or even a city (Troy) whose web of corridors or streets was designed to imitate the underground maze, presumed to be the generative anatomy of the Earth Mother. The Perilous Chapel and the Grail Castle are labyrinthine structures and so also, claims Knight, are Dante's circles of Hell.[48] The mythic rivers of Hades derive from the maze ritual where water is a source of both life and death. When Virgil's characters drink from Lethe they forget this life, that is, undergo a ritual death and, by drinking the waters of Mnemosyne, they are inspired with a pre-natal memory which guides them out of the underworld. Mnemosyne, it should be remembered, is also the primary Muse of classical mythology, a sublimated version, as it were, of the necromantic sibyl.

The proximity of the Grail Messenger to water is elucidated by her essential connection with the Sibyl who, Knight points out, like the "Water Lady" of the later myth, "could be pictured as young and beautiful, or old."[49] The "substantial similarity" of these two figures is their archetypal role as the guiding wisdom and inspiration in the ritual ordeal of death and rebirth.

But, as the mysteries acquire a more transcendental or upperworld character, the prominence of the Sibyl, and of the Earth Mother she personifies, is diminished. By the time she appears in classical literature, she is a minor figure. As Circe and Calypso in _The Odyssey_, the legendary Sibyl is subordinated to the heroic, questing king, whose sea-voyage itself is a reflection of the archetypal maze-ritual. She does not guide him so much as waylay him and the wisdom he seeks in the labyrinth is Tiresias' not hers. _The Aeneid_, too, subordinates the Sibyl to a hero-quester; she appears in the figures of Cassandra and Dido as well as the Cumaean Sibyl who guides Aeneas into the underworld. Cassandra is a prophetess of Troy and Dido is the Queen of Carthage, chief priestess of Cybele. She "initiates" Aeneas in the cave; but the fact that Aeneas abandons her to find his way, alone, to Rome, implies the patriarchal character of the quest.[50] Aeneas seeks the wisdom of his father in the Cumaean labyrinth. And too, the fact that the Sibyl leads him out of the labyrinth by the Ivory Gates, "through which false dreams are sent to mortals," suggests her unreliability as a guide and the "unreal" character of her underworld.

The Sibylline mysteries emphasized, according to Knight, the labyrinth or "maze ritual" which instructed candidates in the mysteries of life generation, the substance of the "Lesser Initiation." Knight speculates that it was contact with Hebrew thought that transformed the labyrinth into a "purgatorial wilderness" and augmented the "Life ritual" with a ritual of purgation.[51] "Allegory already begins with Ecclesiasticus, who," writes Knight, declares that "'the aspirant walks in "crooked ways," wherein he is tormented by the laws and discipline of Wisdom before he finally wins her by the "straight way."'"[52] By Virgil's time, apparently, conceptions of purification and self-mastery, "won by ritual," had been attained and "may legitimately be apprehended from the Sixth Aeneid." But a more explicit literary expression of the purgatorial labyrinth could be found in The Tempest. Knight refers to another anthropologist, Colin Still, whose work Shakespeare's Mystery Play: A Study of the Tempest was published in the same year as The Waste Land. Still claims that Shakespeare's play is a dramatic form of the "Lesser Initiation." He finds the labyrinth in the "forthrights and maeanders" through which the court party arrives on the shore and he sees Ferdinand as a successful candidate, whose "purification" qualifies him for the Greater Initiation. Still distinguishes between the two parts of the mystery ritual by identifying the former with "life and purgation from sin" and the latter with "death and rebirth":

> For, as in the former the aspirant trod the winding paths of an intricate maze that signified our mortal life, and came at last through repentance to that clarity of intellect which is self-finding and self-mastery, so in the latter he was deemed to go through the grave itself, that thereby he might come face to face with the gods and learn the ultimate mysteries of existence.[53]

The Sibylline mysteries were not characterized by this purgative ritual but the Sibyl may be seen in Miranda just as she may be seen in the Grail Messenger. Miranda's role is to initiate Ferdinand (in a cave; the game of chess is part of the labyrinth motif)--and, to deliver him from temptation.

The Sibyl, the Grail Bearer and Miranda represent the female archetype of the mysteries, the natural, spiritual and moral guide to regeneration. They are symbolic manifestations of the Magna Mater idealized by Christian mystics and, possibly, by cult worshippers before them. Eliot's introductory note to The Waste Land suggests that the poem is structured on a quest pattern or a cult ritual such as described by Weston and Frazer, and that male and female characters may be viewed with respect to their symbolic derivation in the archetypal characters of quester and guide. Now that the nature of the female archetype of the Mystery tradition, from the "vegetation ceremonies" to the Grail myth, has been elucidated, it is possible to clarify the archetypal character of the female figure in The Waste Land, and, depending on whether Eliot honors or undermines this archetype, to judge the character of the tradition to which he subscribes.

* * * *

It is now possible to elucidate what Eliot means when he writes that "the one-eyed merchant seller of currants melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples." The three characters are linked to the mysteries of the ancient Middle East. The "one-eyed merchant seller of currants" is the "Smyrna merchant/ Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants," an adumbration of Weston's "Syrian merchants" who along with Phoenician sailors transport cult worship to Western civilization.[54] Mr. Eugenides and Phlebas are modern vehicles of a modern cult which has lost its religious roots in antiquity. The merchant conveys little sense of mystery: his esotericism is reduced to the code of commercial enterprise, "C.i.f. London: documents on sight" (which, Eliot decodes in his notes: "the currants were quoted at a price 'cost insurance and freight to London'; and the Bill of Lading, etc., were to be handed to the buyer upon payment of the sight draft"). And his sense of recreation clearly involves no ritual of rebirth: "luncheon at the Canon Street Hotel/ Followed by a weekend at the Metropole." Both the "one-eyed merchant" and the "drowned Phoenician Sailor" appear in Madame Sosostris' "wicked pack of cards," that is, as instrumental to the cult of the modern underworld with its crank fortune-tellers and necromancers. But the "Phoenician Sailor" may also indicate a restoration of the mysteries. He may be a modern initiate who undergoes a ritual "death by water" in the tradition of Adonis. Unlike the materialistic "merchant seller of currants," Phlebas forgets this world of profits and pleasures: borne by sea-currents, he enters the whirlpool just as "Ferdinand Prince of Naples" enters the tempest and suffers a purgative sea-change.

The male archetype of the poem could be the "Mystery," himself, like Adonis in the Hellenic mysteries described in the Hermetic writings from which Weston quotes. The "Son of man" (in "The Burial of the Dead") is descended to the "fate sphere" and in his "weakness" is "bound upon the wheel."[55] To "win his own freedom and regain his original state" he undergoes an ordeal of purgation ("death by water") and, through "repentance" ("O Lord Thou pluckest me out") acquires moral wisdom ("Give, sympathize, control") which is "self-finding" ("Shall I at least set my lands in order?") and "self-mastery" ("controlling hands").

Knight asserts that The Waste Land is "the most impressive modern initiation myth."[56] Grover Smith confirms that the poem is an initiation myth and further indicates the appearance of a lesser and greater initiation.[57] The "maze ritual" is, perhaps, best seen in part V where the winding road in the desert mountains suggests the "labyrinth or purgatorial wilderness"--the "crooked way" of this mortal life--the lesser ritual of life and purgation.[58] The "white road" on which the disciples travelled to Emmaus to behold the resurrected Christ suggests the "straight way" of death and rebirth. According to anthropologists, the myth of initiation traditionally involves a female figure who is the principal guide and source of wisdom and inspiration, while according to Christian mystics, the salvation of man depends on the love and "Genesis" of a divine Woman. It can be demonstrated, however, that the female figure of The Waste Land is severely undermined: the withered Sibyl in the epigraph appears to be Eliot's female archetype, powerless, degenerate, wholly unreliable.

The "Hyacinths" passage appears to be the first scene of initiation:

> 'You gave me Hyacinths first a year ago;
> 'They called me the hyacinth girl.'
> --Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden,
> Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
> Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
> Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
> Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

The hyacinth girl with "arms full" of flowers and wet hair suggests love and fertility. Drenching, notes Weston, was a fertility charm to induce spring rains.[59] She could be Frazer's temple priestess acting on behalf of Aphrodite, the goddess of love and fertility, and she could be the "Water Lady" of the Grail legend and the spiritual bride--the "heart of light"--signifying complete initiation. The couple returns from the garden:

the "esoteric" nature of the ritual is indicated by this ellipsis--the garden "event" is not presented. The male character of the couple undergoes a change; like the Fisher King, he is "neither/ Living nor dead," and, like the initiate in his march through the labyrinth, he is blinded. That the initiation is not complete is indicated by the fact that it fails to generate a "clarity of intellect"--"I knew nothing"--but generates, at most, an ambiguous vision of love and truth--"Looking into the heart of light, the silence."

The ritual quest for spiritual revival appears to be enveloped by a traditional quest for love, opening with the inspired song of the sailor (who, perhaps, "melts into the Phoenician Sailor") but closing with the sad line, "Oed und leer das Meer," hinting that both quests have failed. In the following scene the Phoenician Sailor is tragically informed that his fate is drowning. That the sea in which he drowns is not to be a source of Life but barren and empty is indicated by the Wagnerian line. Isolde fails Tristan and the hyacinth girl, in some way, fails the candidate-quester. This conclusion is radically contrary to the usual reading of this scene; most critics propose that it is the failure of the man to respond to the girl both spiritually and sexually.[60] One critic, J. B. Vickery, interprets The Waste Land exclusively from an anthropological perspective, with the major premise that it represents an awakening of religious consciousness from "imitative fertility rituals to the spiritual symbolism of Christianity."[61] He connects the hyacinth girl with the Lady of the Rocks, the "great Asiatic Goddess" whose figure was sculptured on the rocks bordering her sanctuary of water and red flowers.[62] Vickery's reading of the "Hyacinths" passage, however, is ambiguous; he indicates the failure of initiation but places the blame alternatively on the man and the girl. The protagonist, apparently, fails to see the girl's offering in ritual terms and succumbs "simply to the coupling of animals." He insists that the "hyacinths in the girl's arms represent the love of a god" who is, at once, Hyacinth, the aboriginal vegetative deity and Apollo.[63] It is Apollo who is the "heart of light," the "higher love" of a god embodied in the "human love" of a woman.[64] But the male character

> fails to connect his attraction to the hyacinth girl with the higher love that is "the attraction toward God." He cannot even detect the sacred marriage which the girl who is a priestess of god, is offering him. Her offer is one of knowledge and initiation on the lowest level of the quest; the mystery of human and vegetative fertility as symbolized by the sacred marriage is within the protagonist's grasp. But lacking the higher love, he sees in the sacred marriage "simply the coupling of animals."[65]

But is the failure to see "higher love" attributed to the protagonist or to the girl? He was, after all, "[l]ooking into the heart of light." He envisioned Apollo, or the spirit of "higher love," but failed to see it incarnated in human love, the love of woman. She is not a source of inspiration. Instead, she embodies "knowledge and initiation on the lowest level" and she fulfills only an exoteric, ritualistic role. It is only the drama she recalls, the annual public event: "'You gave me Hyacinths first a year ago;/ They called me the hyacinth girl.'" He, meanwhile, recognizes the esoteric ritual and recalls the traumatic experience of his failed initiation. Though he foresaw the outcome of full initiation, the revelation of God, his quest was in vain. There is no spiritual communion with woman who embraces, it appears, only the mystery of life generation (the mystery of the phallus represented by the hyacinths) and there is no divine illumination ("my eyes failed . . . and

I knew nothing") with a priestess-guide who merely enacts the ritual drama. The hyacinth girl receives the sacrifice of her lover-initiate but she does not present herself as the "Blessed Nature" of the mysteries, described by Weston. She is neither Aphrodite, who is "in love with . . . and desires Soul" nor Cybele, who "emasculates . . . her love and calls the masculine power of Soul to herself." She signifies, it would appear, Frazer's "cruel goddess," exclusively. She is, possibly, a vulgar incarnation of Aphrodite, for she "emasculates" but offers neither "love" nor "Genesis" (nor any symbol like the Grail which would indicate such). Their aspirations are not mutual; the exchange between them occurs at different levels. He presents Hyacinths which represent his virile soul while she presents "wet hair," signifying only sexual love and fertility. In terms of spirit, she is barren and empty like the sea, the primordial Magna Mater, who generates life only at its "lowest" level. Her fertility is not what the candidate ultimately quests for, but it is all he is offered, and this, as the Wagnerian line suggests, is tragic. The "_significant_ emotion"[67] of this passage may be compared to that expressed in Swinburne's "Triumph of Time" where the theme is, also, the barrenness of woman's love and the mortality of natural Maternity:

> Mother of loves that are swift to fade,
>   Mother of mutable winds and hours.
> A barren mother, a mother-maid . . .
>
> The loves and hours of the life of a man,
>   They are swift and sad, being born of the sea.
> Hours that rejoice and regret for a span,
>   Born with a man's breath, mortal as he;
> Loves that are lost ere they come to birth,
>   Weeds of the wave, without fruit upon earth.
> I lose what I long for, save what I can,
>   My love, my love and no love for me.

And while the sea-mother is barren, so, too, is Mother Earth. The spring rains of the opening passage fail to generate the spirit of Adonis, who is both a vegetative and transcendental deity. They leave the "tubers" dry which, in turn, feed only a "little life"--meaning, here, the "Lower" generation of physical life. Only material life (Mater), in its routine cycle of the seasons, is regenerated and, cruelly, demanding the sacrifice of masculine generative powers. The worship of Frazer's goddess, Vickery points out, "entails the personal sacrifice of virility."[68] The "significant emotion" conveyed in this passage recalls another Swinburne poem, "Ave Atque Vale," which refers to the Earth Mother as

> . . . the solemn earth, a fatal mother,
> With sadder than the Niobean womb,
> And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.

Grover Smith discloses an allusion to James Thomson in this opening passage of The Waste Land: "Mother feedeth thus our little life,/ That we in turn may feed her with our death."[69] While the female figure in The Waste Land is barren and empty like the sea, the poem's archetypal Earth Mother, the male figure is virile. Eliot's men are lustier than his women, though the waste land is mostly inhabited by lifeless characters of both sexes. The clerk "assaults" the typist, Albert "wants a good time," and Mr. Eugenides proposes a weekend of debauchery at the Metropole. Lil, the typist, and the Thames-daughters, by contrast, are reluctant, indifferent or insensible in their seduction. Eliot's female figure is also deadly. Vickery points out the connection between the Lady of the Rocks and Belladonna, the "cruel goddess" inhabiting the sanctuary of Adonis with its rocks and water and flowers. "Belladonna" is a term derived from the feminine custom of wearing eyeshadow made from the Belladonna plant, the Deadly Nightshade.[70] The connection with the hyacinth girl is clear: Belladonna is a lethal stimulant just as the hyacinth girl with her wet hair is an emasculating enchantress.

Helen Gardner argues that the line, "[l]ooking into the heart of light, the silence," signifies spiritual ecstasy.[71] But the "heart of light" may be enveloped in a deadly "silence" just as the spirit of Christianity, signified by Saint Mary Woolnoth's tolling bell, is muted in the womb-tomb of the underworld city. In seeking spiritual communion with sensual woman, unmediated by "higher" love, the man's questing spirit is projected into darkness, into the pagan or secular world of fertility ritual or sexual love. His "greater" purpose loses both vision and voice in the materialism of the essentially feminine world. In a review of Adlington's translation of Apuleius' Golden Ass, Eliot refers to the classical Magna Mater as the "queen of all that are in hell" and to her "lamentable silences."[72] This is the Magna Mater who rules the waste land, the queen of Hell, the goddess of Hades, the Earth Mother of the labyrinth. The quester-lover of the "Hyacinths" scene is initiated by her priestess, guided to her underworld, embraced by her "lamentable silences." He is fruitlessly and hopelessly engaged to a primitive, materialistic or naturalistic sensibility and not to a transcendent, regenerative spirit, of love and light, as he had expected: hence, the sad Wagnerian line that follows.

The hyacinth girl is akin to the Sibyl of the epigraph who is not the Apollonian oracle of Delphi but the necromantic Sibyl of Cumae. Furthermore, this Sibyl derives from Petronius' Satyricon rather than Virgil's Aeneid, where she is the emblem of decadent Rome and of the dissolute cult of Cybele.[73] In the Satyricon, the Sibyl and Apollo are juxtaposed; the former symbolizes the waning age of matriarchal worship while the latter symbolizes the emerging age of transcendent patriarchy. Petronius envisions a hopeless marriage between them, allegorizing the irreconcilability of her essentially "lower" (sexual) nature and his "higher" (spiritual) nature. Apollo, the stronger of the pair, has the Sibyl slowly wither and die so that he, in turn, may prevail. Like Virgil before him, Petronius diminishes the power of the Sibyl and of the Magna Mater in favour of male authority and divinity. The historical shift from matriarchy to patriarchy and the consequent degradation of goddesses and priestesses began before Virgil and before the early Church Fathers. "The later Hellenes," writes Robert Graves, "belittled the Great Goddess of the Mediterranean [Aphrodite] . . . by placing her under male tutelage and regarding her solemn sex orgies as adulterous indiscretions."[74] The "Hyacinths" passage of The Waste Land indicates that Eliot follows this tradition, undermining the female figure in her archetypal role in the quest for love and inspiration. In the following scenes of initiation, in which a female figure appears, the degenerate character of Eliot's female archetype is confirmed.

Madame Sosostris is a modern version of the ancient diviner or magician who manipulated "life symbols" to control the "Luck of the Year."[75] The Tarot cards, Weston tells us, derive their significance from these symbols and Adonis is the anthropomorphic "Luck of the Year" which sympathetic magic hoped to secure. She tells the fortune of the Phoenician Sailor who, being a member of the cult of Adonis and a sailor, fears "death by water" and seeks assurance regarding his future. Ironically, she prophesies precisely what he does not want to hear or what, precisely, he is prepared to hear, given that sailors ceremoniously entered the "'house of death,' the labyrinth" to guard themselves against the sea. Madame Sosostris possesses oracular powers but though she is "the wisest woman in Europe" she lacks the vital "Gnosis" that would save the Sailor. She can find the "man with three staves," whom Eliot associates with the Fisher King (Adonis), but she cannot find the Hanged Man. Eliot associates the Hanged Man with Frazer's Hanged God who signifies ritual death and is the symbol of resurrection and salvation (as either Adonis or Christ). At the end of the poem, however, the protagonist does find the Hanged Man, the hooded figure on the "white road." (Eliot notes an association between these two, as well.) He appears in the opening scene of "What the Thunder Said," which ambiguously describes the festivals of Adonis (or the mystery processions) or the rabble attending the crucifixion. It is he who "was alive [but] is now dead." Vickery interprets the failure of Madame Sosostris to see the Hanged Man as the failure of magic and her lack of interest:

> . . . that Madame Sosostris does not find this figure, while the protagonist does, is a clear indication of their respective natures and of the extent of their interest in restoring the waste land and its inhabitants to fertility. It also demonstrates the inadequacy of the magical attitude toward the world as compared to the fully awakened religious consciousness.[76]

But the fact that Madame Sosostris finds no Hanged Man is only one of her flaws. She is "forbidden to see" the meaning of the "blank" card, which is "something [the one-eyed merchant] carries on his back." If the Smyrna merchant, like Weston's Syrian merchant, carries the cult worship of Attis to Western civilization, it is more than a bag of currants he carries on his back. Perhaps, it is a symbol of the resurrection like the tree on which Attis was hanged or like the cross Christ carried on his back. It appears, then, that she is forbidden to handle the greater initiation of death and resurrection--and probably because of her sex. Weston reports that women were absolutely excluded from the Attis mysteries in Western communities and that in one Grail legend, "Perceval is informed that no woman may speak of the Grail."[77] "It is so secret a thing," she continues,

> that no woman, be she wife or maid, may venture to speak of it. A priest, or a man of holy life might indeed tell the marvel of the Grail. . . .[78]

It is the Perceval legend to which Eliot refers in his notes.

The most prominent card in Madame Sosostris' pack, after the card with the female trinity, is "the Wheel," that is, the "Wheel of Fortune" or the "Wheel of the Year" signifying the seasonal cycle. That Madame Sosostris can see the "Wheel" and the "man with three staves" (whom Vickery identifies as the triple-phallused Osiris, another Dying God like the Fisher King)[79] and not the Hanged Man suggests that her conception of Adonis is very primitive: he is still the "Luck of the Year" and not yet the "Mystery" in her eyes. She is a descendent of the priestess of Frazer's "Great Asiatic Goddess," a descendent, that is, of the hyacinth girl, in whose interest she seeks to conserve physical nature but who, as Vickery observes, is uninterested in (or ignorant of) the transcendent spirit. She would have him "bound upon the wheel," like Aphrodite who--as Maud Bodkin points out in her Archetypal Patterns in Poetry--"represents the power that drags . . . youth from its delicate momentary poise into the whirling flux of life and death."[80] The "Wheel" appears, once again, in "Death by Water" which Vickery explains by recalling "Frazer's account of an effigy of Death being fixed to a wheel and then thrown into the water."[81] The "drowned Phoenician Sailor" signifies the vegetative Adonis flung out to sea to perpetuate the fertile cycle. Grover Smith notes that Phlebas is "as Buddhists say 'bound to the wheel.'"

> As he rose and fell
> He passed the stages of his age and youth
> Entering the whirlpool.

Water, here, as in the "Hyacinths" scene or in the opening passage, is not regenerating. Phlebas is immersed in waters that make him forget this life, like the waters of Lethe, but there is no Mnemosyne here, no guiding Muse.

Madame Sosostris' vision of "crowds of people, walking round in a ring" guides the quester to the underworld city where he "walk[s] among the lowest of the dead." There, he is surprised to discover that "death had undone so many" and beholds a procession of lost souls, "ironically similar to a Grail procession"[82] or to the blind march at Eleusis, tramping a circuitous route to and from London's commercial center. These are the living dead who have sold their souls to strictly material interests, entrapped in an incessant mechanical routine without transcendental aspirations. Heedless of Saint Mary Woolnoth's tolling bell which marks the hour of Christ's death, they reject salvation: hence, the hollow, "dead sound on the final stroke of nine." The "Unreal city" is a city of Hell, "inhabited on the one hand by the secular and on the other by the spiritually ignorant, like those characterized in the third and fourth cantos of the _Inferno_."[83] Madame Sosostris foresees no hope nor light, foreshadowing, instead, a ghostly populace eternally fixed to her Wheel of Fortune. In protest, the quester is compelled to exclaim, "London, your people is bound upon the wheel!" (31). This sorcerer, Sosostris, is an untrustworthy guide who fails to see beyond the "crooked ways" of "our mortal life," who can lead into but not out of the labyrinth.

Madame Sosostris is a contemporary version of the declining Sibyl: her oracular powers show one way only, down into the Hell of a modern European metropolis. Her "bad cold" is, perhaps, a reflection of the Sibyl's atrophied condition. She is a figure of the underworld not only because she is "in league" with Mrs. Equitone in an illegal and heretical business, but also because of her corrupt necromancy. A pathetic representative of the Magna Mater of the ancient mysteries, she offers neither love nor inspiration to her client-candidate, expressing instead, affected care for her partner-in-crime ("dear Mrs. Equitone") and anxiety for her private dealings in the underground.

Mrs. Equitone symbolizes the cult of the living dead, neutral (or neutered) in spirit, "neither/ Living nor dead." The cult of modern civilization is gravely missing a ritual of full initiation, of purgation, death, and resurrection.

If the hyacinth girl and Madame Sosostris initiate the protagonist it is only in their power to initiate incompletely. "The feminine power which should enable the protagonist to complete his quest for initiation cannot do so," writes Grover Smith.[84] There is a "lesser initiation" into the mysteries of physical life, the hidden "event" in the garden and the "Descent into Hell," but no ritual of purgation. Vickery claims that the primitive, "savage" nature of the hyacinth girl is revealed in her "corruption" into the figure of the fiery-haired lady of "A Game of Chess" who represents the "need for a purgative ritual."

"This corruption of the woman as a fertility figure," he writes,

> is borne out by the contrast between her hair and that of the Hyacinth girl. The latter's was a symbol of . . . life giving fecundity, for it was "wet with rain." The woman's, however, is indicative of a need for a purgative ritual since it is "spread out in fiery points."[85]

He proceeds to point to the "corruption" of the temple priestess, Frazer's ritual "harlot," who would sacrifice her virginity or her hair in its stead, in the figure of the modern prostitute variously characterized in The Waste Land. He writes,

> The ritual of sex has become a series of meaningless gestures whose result is the destruction rather than the creation of life. Consequently, her threat to "walk the street/ With my hair down" conveys the contemporary social repugnance but not the religious awe for the prostitute. The woman whose religious devotion was stronger than her fear of indiscriminate sexuality is the antithesis of the lady in the boudoir and Lil.[86]

The poem does, indeed, express the need for a purgation ritual through its "corruption" of the female figure. But it does so, perhaps, with greater urgency through the voice of the ascetics, Buddha and St. Augustine to whom Eliot refers at the end of "The Fire Sermon." Weston reports that Buddhism anathematized the "Life Cults" of the Magna Mater and Eliot himself notes St. Augustine's condemnation of Cybele and her priestesses who still held sway at Carthage in his time. The fiery-haired lady is clearly linked to the "cauldron of unholy loves" requiring purgation.

The typist is another "corruption" of the religious woman who engages in "indiscriminate sex." More precisely, she is a corruption of the Grail Bearer. She presents the clerk-quester with a mock "Mystic Meal" by "lay[ing] out food in tins," and she "perilously" spreads her "drying combinations." The "tins" replace the sacred "Feeding Vessel" and instead of directing him to the Chapel Perilous she leads him to her divan (which is, itself, a kind of maze, cluttered with "stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays"). According to the Hermetic writings, the "Mother of the Gods" initiates the candidate in a ritual feast (Hilario) in which he is shown the way out of the labyrinth. Here, the typist initiates a routine, not a ritual, and "after the event" shows the protagonist out without illuminating the passage: he "gropes his way, finding the stairs unlit."

Three different labyrinth motifs associated, specifically, with a female figure may be discerned in the poem, one in each of the first three parts. There is the underworld city of the living dead engaged in its circular procession or "blind march"; the fiery, smothering, aphrodisical hell of Cleopatra's throne room (Dido's "Laquearia") which leaves the quester-candidate "troubled, confused"; and the typist's cluttered divan and unlit staircase which leaves him groping in the dark. All are dead-ends in the search for love and inspiration.

The game of chess is central to the ritual initiation and part of the labyrinth motif in The Tempest. More specifically, it is the "purgative ritual" directed by Miranda in the cave. The "Game of Chess," which is central to the symbolism of part II, alludes to Middleton's Women Beware Women where it is the vehicle of a seduction directed by a woman. Seduction is, of course, the antithesis to purgation; the labyrinth motif in The Waste Land is a further "corruption" of the female archetype. This applies especially to part II which Drew summarizes:

> . . . "A Game of Chess" deals directly with the artificiality and lack of human or mythical meaning in the central "fertility" situation, the marriage relation of men and women. It opens with a reminiscence of Cleopatra, but the vitality of the contemporary women in the dramatic glimpses that follow is as that of queens on a chessboard compared with that on the "burnished throne" of Egypt, and their "games with

> men are nothing but an empty pastime or an open hostility
> ending in a stalemate.[87]

Knight clarifies the role of the guide in the Grail legend, explaining that the chief guide is a woman, either young or old, and not always reliable. The hyacinth girl may represent the Grail Messenger as "lovely young girl" and Madame Sosostris as wise "old hag" (since wisdom usually entails age). Both figures are associated with water, like the Grail Bearer, but neither of them bears the Vessel that symbolizes the female capacity to regenerate spirit. Madame Sosostris warns the candidate from the quest; the girl charms or bewitches him, and both prove to be unreliable guides. Their power of initiation is deceptive, if not lethal, and this is most clearly reflected by the female figure in the Chapel graveyard at the end of the poem:

> A woman drew her long black hair out tight
> And fiddled whisper music on those strings . . .
> Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel

This is not the spiritual bride who awaits the quester at the end of full initiation. She is dark and sinister and seductive. She does not play her archetypal role and "upbraid him" for his failure, either, for she is not--like Madame Sosostris--interested in his quest at all. Her "long black hair" cannot be supposed to bear religious significance like the "wet hair" of the hyacinth girl. Clearly, she is no "heart of light." The nubile woman in the garden and the dark lady in the graveyard are, respectively, the constructive and destructive forces that turn the wheel of life. Eliot's female archetype is analogous to Maud Bodkin's archetypal Aphrodite who personifies the "whirling flux of life and death," since she, too, bears the fatal wheel to which man's "age and youth" are hopelessly fixed.

Frazer and Weston both inform us that the primary female role in ritual ceremony is mourning. Here, there are only "murmurs of maternal lamentation" which, like the seductive "whisper music" of the woman among "tumbled graves" signify an unsettling irreverence. Women, in The Waste Land, apparently have no respect, no interest, no knowledge of full initiation into the "Mystery of Man" which entails, along with "Life ritual," a ritual of purgation, death and resurrection. They represent, at once, the most primitive and the most decadent form of the mysteries of the Magna Mater. The "central doctrine" of this cult is material (mortal) satisfaction, which Eliot demonstrates to be as much anti-life as it is irreligious. The labyrinth, the living death, the savage human nature, which his female archetype represents, comprise the "futility and anarchy that is contemporary history"--the waste land itself--the modern city bound to the vain and vexatious wheel and collapsing under the ravages of war.

* * * *

If, as Vickery proposes, the protagonist of The Waste Land does, ultimately, awaken to full religious consciousness, he does so through some way other than the initiation by women or the inspiration of the Magna Mater. He is guided, instead, it seems, by a patriarchal God speaking through the prophets (Ezekiel and Ecclesiastes noted in part I), warning and admonishing, yet at the same time, recognizing the "Mystery" of the "Son of man." Too, he is guided by the Buddha and St. Augustine, to whom Eliot emphatically refers at the end of "The Fire Sermon," where the protagonist appears "among the lowest of the dead" groping blindly in her living hell. "The collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of the poem," writes Eliot, "is not an accident." Finally, and most importantly, there is the guiding example of Adonis-Christ, risen from the dead, somewhat vaguely figured in the poem. Through a tradition which elevates the "Mystery of Man" and undermines the mysteries of the Magna Mater, the protagonist may find his way to moral clarity, self-mastery and self-possession. Despite his misguidance by women, he may find his way out of the "lesser initiation" of life, and proceed, on the "white road," towards the "greater."

There is, however, no male "character"--just as there is no female character--who appears to acknowledge the wisdom of this tradition. Phlebas and Mr. Eugenides are clearly bound to the Wheel, and the clerk is left in the dark. There is no male character in part V, but only a dead man, a hooded figure and a dark lady. But there is a "personage"--Tiresias--who sees the "substance" of the poem and who is, himself, a "Myth of Man." Eliot takes his "personage" from Ovid, "recalling his change from male to female, and subsequent recovery of his manhood."[88]

The sexes are supposed "to meet in Tiresias" but Eliot's note is somewhat misleading. Tiresias may experience female sexuality but he does not, in this poem, present it from a woman's perspective. Elizabeth Schneider, it may be recalled, observes that Tiresias is "a symbolic figure" who "has to do with the theme and unity of culture, not with any narrow consideration of technical point of view. . . ." But Schneider's observation requires qualification. Tiresias may be a strategy of Eliot's mythic method to convey theme and unity of culture, but he is also used to convey the perspective of a certain tradition. And this tradition is clearly misogynous. Through Tiresias' eyes, which are the eyes of a wise old man envisioning the mysteries of life from a classical or orthodox perspective, Eliot presents the supposed degeneracy of woman as she appears in myth and history and in the culminating decadence of modern civilization.

If we consider Tiresias in a Jungian context, he, himself, appears to represent a primary male archetype. P. W. Martin's *Experiment in Depth* explores the central archetype of rebirth in Eliot's poetry and outlines the male and female archetypes underlying mythic literature in general. According to Martin, the "wise old man" archetype takes many shapes: "god, prophet, sage, law-giver, king . . . judge . . ." all of which, we can suppose, melt into Tiresias.[89] "He is," continues Martin, "the embodiment of age-old experience, wisdom, *logos* of mankind," and he conveys the characteristic theme of "the knowledge that can miraculously transform."[90] He pauses to distinguish between the essential virtues of the anima and the archetype: his is "*logos*--learning, wisdom, insight," hers is "*eros*--charm, fascination, allure."[91] And, he adds that, "to some extent" the archetype of the "hero-saviour" may be subsumed under the primary archetype of the "wise old man."[92]

Tiresias is a "wise old man" archetype and "personage" embodying age-old experience ("I, Tiresias, have foresuffered all") and universal wisdom ("I, Tiresias . . ./ Perceived the scene and foretold all the rest,") merging with a (Fisher) King and (Quester) Hero-Saviour. He is *logos*, constituted by the "Gnosis" of an Old Testament and a *Upanishad* God, the *logos* of Christ, and the wisdom of the ascetics. But he, too, possesses anima, the woman's part of the man's psyche.

Technically speaking, if Tiresias is derived from either classical myth or Jungian psychology, he is not androgynous but male. Ovid presents him as alternately male and female (and, ultimately, male) and Jung's notion of anima is a masculine concept. But Eliot adapts the myth and the archetype to convey the primary theme of the poem--the essential irreconcilability of the sexes. Martin's note on the mythic figure of the "hermaphrodite" confirms this theme, since he claims "it stands for an unsuccessful union of [sexual] opposites, or the opposites before they have fallen apart."[93] Anima or "eros" is the virtue of feminine nature, the capacity to "charm" or "allure." It is the only virtue possessed by woman in The Waste Land, by the hyacinth girl, for instance, or the seductive woman with long black hair. But these women do not possess an "eros" which inspires a regenerative love any more than Madame Sosostris possesses a "logos" that can "miraculously transform."

The female archetype, according to Martin, does indeed embody the capacity to regenerate, though wisdom belongs exclusively to the realm of the "wise old man." "In mythology, folklore and religion," he writes,

> the Great Mother has played a mighty and continuous rôle from the earliest times. The female figurines found in cave deposits of the Upper Palaeolithic, with their stylized exaggeration of the sexual features, are almost certainly representations of this image. In the historical era the Magna Mater has appeared under many names . . . the Anatolean Cybele . . . the Egyptian Isis; Demeter; the triple Hecate; the Ephesian Diana. . . . She also has many guises. She is the maiden. She is the earth mother. She is the queen of the underworld. She is the goddess of war, the goddess of nature, the goddess of love, the goddess of marriage . . . goddess of fecundity, goddess of the moon.[94]

Accordingly, the female archetype embodies the "theme of death and rebirth." The Waste Land presents her as the embodiment of the theme of life and death, but not "rebirth," as the mysteries presented her. As "Earth Mother," she is diffused into the landscape imagery of the poem, and as goddess of love and fecundity, she is personified by primarily degenerate, love-making characters. But she is not a "personage" like the wise-old man, Tiresias. (Eliot reverses the archetypal situation, as Frazer sees it, for "originally the goddess was a more important personage than the god."4) In Eliot, she is at most his anima.

Martin tells us that "the feminine principle" in a man's psychology is the "deep creative purpose of earth and time." But Tiresias' anima is, rather, deeply destructive. It is, perhaps, the conscious or unconscious purpose of the poem to show Tiresias' need to overcome his anima which, as one critic says, he does on the strength of his "excessive animus."[95] This purpose would reflect Jung's hypothesis of the "sublimation" of the rebirth archetype through the logos of Christ, which he articulates in Psychology of the Unconscious. Here, he hails the ascendence of the (transforming) wisdom of man over the barbaric Magna Mater whose worship, he argues, ultimately led to the degeneracy of women and frustration of man's innate religious needs. His argument implies that feminine nature is primarily material and that the great turning point in the evolution of religious consciousness was brought about by the logos primary to man.[96]

In his 1929 essay on Dante, Eliot refers to "sublimation" as a "very sound psychological treatise" and relates it to Dante's transforming vision of Beatrice from sensual (living) to sublime (dead) femininity. The women in The Waste Land are not sublimated but sensual and/or sickly. They are dying or among the living dead. And their archetypal role in rebirth is, always, in some way, undermined. At most, Eliot's living woman signifies a "Descent into Hell" but not purgatory (and certainly, she is not his guide to earthly paradise).

Eliot quotes Ovid's Tiresias passage in his "Notes" and refers to its "great anthropological interest." In this passage, Juno is presented as an unthinking fury, unduly outraged by Tiresias' judgement that women experience greater sexual pleasure than men. Her retaliatory action is vindictive and unjustified, particularly since Tiresias, more than any other mortal, is qualified to make an objective judgement. His punishment is rectified, in turn, by a benevolent and omnipotent father. What Eliot notes, perhaps, is the mythic allegory of the apparently blinding sexual nature, or sexual vanity, of the female as opposed to the inspired foresight of the male, to the irreconcilable difference between the sexes which is given such grave treatment in the poem. What Tiresias sees, in his female phase in The Waste Land, following the blinding in the "Hyacinths" scene, is the degenerate sexuality of woman--of Cleopatra, Dido, Lil, the typist, the Thames-daughters and especially, in the drafts, of Fresca. He has been awarded, it seems, with a disillusioning foresight about the female half of life, in particular. He observes that it is woman's sexuality that turns the wheel, though with diminishing pleasure and power, and that her exclusively sexual nature is antagonistic to and corruptive of man's archetypal quest.

Ultimately, Tiresias sees the need for purgation, the possibilities of a ritual death and, if only vaguely, a figure of resurrected life. The hooded figure appearing near the end of the poem is ambiguously presented as a symbol of salvation, Christ between the disciples on the road to Emmaus or a symbol of devastation, an anti-Christ, leading the barbaric "hooded hordes." The figure is also ambiguously sexed ("I do not know whether a man or a woman"). Since the Sibyl or the "cult of the Magna Mater" has been seen in "savage" antithesis to the "Son of man," she may be aligned with the anti-Christ.

It may be instructive, here, to refer to The Shepherd of Hermas

(c. A.D. 140). Both Eliot and Jung refer to this work in their discussions of transforming (sublimating) vision.[97] Hermas' protagonist is a recent convert to Christianity before it had been institutionalized and was still "taking to itself the ancient association pertaining to the priestly and prophetic woman."[98] On a journey to Cumae followed by a descent into the labyrinth, he confuses his vision of sublime womanhood with the sensual, the Virgin with the Sibyl. But, as his faith strengthens, the Sibyl withers and is gradually supplanted by a powerful figure of beatitude. For Hermas, the withered Sibyl represents his "aged and already faded and powerless" faith in the older Magna Mater. For Tiresias, the withered Sibyl represents his faith in a modern, material world which her figure embodies.

Tiresias is like the shepherd, caught between two religious views of the world, the ancient vegetation "cult of the Magna Mater" and the transcendental mystery of Christ-Adonis. If Tiresias' faith were more secure, the "Hanged Man," the "Son of man," might clearly emerge from the hooded figure. The "moral" of The Waste Land is implied in this comparison: before salvation can be envisioned, the Sibyl--the natural woman and her mysteries--must die.

Eliot's archetypal female is degenerate and her image is the "substance" of what Tiresias sees in the mythic procedure towards regeneration. She points out the gravity of the need for purgation and transcendence, but only indirectly, through Tiresias' apprehension of the corruption of mankind. She, herself, entertains no vision of regeneration, nor does she undergo any ritual of transformation. Eliot, it appears, follows the orthodox tradition of excluding women from the "Mystery of Man."

"Death by Water" is that part of the poem representing the passage of transformation (like the "sea-change" in The Tempest). It is the only part in which no female character appears. Elizabeth Drew observes that the address to "Gentile or Jew" is taken from the Epistle to the Romans "where Paul argues that the new life in Christ belongs equally to both." "He insists too," she continues, "on the inseparability of life and death in the regeneration: 'so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death.'"[99] Although Paul does not address men exclusively, Eliot does--by appealing to the fellows, the semblables, of the "drowned Phoenician Sailor": "Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you."

The appearance (through allusion or direct reference) of the Hebrew prophets, of Christianity and Buddhism, and the deferential (and not satirical) treatment they receive, confirms the orthodox character of the poem. That the poem is an orthodox assimilation of a mystery tradition is particularly confirmed by its undermining of the female archetype. Eliot's poem not only falls into the classical tradition of Homer and Virgil in its subordination of the female mystery to a greater male quest, but also, the orthodoxy of Hippolytus and Origen in its portrayal of woman as exclusively natural, especially sexual, and essentially degenerate. From such writers as diverse as Hermas and Petronius, one serious and inspirational, the other, satirical and decadent, Eliot derives the image of the dying Sibyl, his female archetype.

Tiresias may be an embodiment of the "mind" Eliot describes in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," that is to say, "a mind which changes, and . . . which abandons nothing en route, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the

Magdalenian draughtsmen."[100] Even so, it is a mind that does not undergo evolutionary change, for as Eliot explains, such historical development does not constitute, for either the artist or the psychologist, "any improvement."[101] But he, himself, seems to be of a different mind by the time he is writing The Waste Land. He still maintains, as the poem shows, that a poet's "historical sense" should include "the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer[102] but he ridicules pre-historic man of the Upper Paleolithic era and the subject of his rock drawings, the great fertility goddess.[103] The Waste Land reveals the poet's religious (or idiosyncratic) sense of "contemporary history" and implies that if European civilization is to find salvation from its present condition of "futility and anarchy" it must, it seems, overcome the attraction to the Earth Mother that so obsessed the Magdalenian draughtsmen. Since she cannot be "superannuated" from universal memory, nor yet sublimated, the poet finds another way to regenerate his sense of culture. Ultimately, he chooses the most traditional way, the disfigurement of the female archetype, by demonstrating, that is, the (potential) rehabilitation of man simultaneously to the degeneration of woman. Eliot's female archetype is the most decadent figure of the primordial goddess; his "Lady of the Rocks" is but a "lowly . . . Magdalene" (27).

CHAPTER II

MYTH: "DEGENERATE DESCENDENTS"

Eliot uses myth in The Waste Land--as he said later Joyce had used it in Ulysses--for the purpose of "manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity" and as "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."[1] His poem is built on a scaffolding provided by the past: it enacts a universal myth of the quest for the source of inner vitality, showing at once what he sees as modern disorientation from the moral and spiritual norm and the means of cultural regeneration. The myth of quest and recovery is at the heart of his meaning. But while his mythic, male archetype, the "Son of man," signifies the ideal from which history has strayed and to which it should hope to return, his female archetype, the degenerate Sibyl, signifies the universal source of chaos and corruption.

Mystery traditions of the past feature woman as the key figure of initiation, whether as temple priestess, Sibyl or Grail Bearer. But the tradition out of which Eliot writes treats her presence as antithetical and even antagonistic to the quest. To Eliot, woman is the key figure in the adulteration of the quest in modern times. All of the female characters in the poem may be seen as variations, in contemporary dress, of Petronius' decadent Sibyl who is featured in the epigraph.

Eliot's mythic method organizes The Waste Land so that it may be viewed from two perspectives: from modernity to myth, on the one hand, so that the fragmentary scenes or "broken images" from modern life may be viewed in context of a mythic past, the archetypal quest with its male and female archetypes, quester and guide and, on the other hand, from myth to modernity, so that myth may be viewed in decline from its ideal appearance in antiquity to the present day. The first perspective reveals poetic order and unity while the second reveals mythic degeneracy in the character of modernity. Examination of The Waste Land from the first perspective is the subject of Chapter I of this thesis. In Chapter II, I propose to examine the poem from the second perspective.

Close study of the poem's surface, its characters and imagery, in relation to its symbolic depths, its mythic sources, will expose the degenerate face of modernity. Women in The Waste Land may be seen as local, particular and diminished adumbrations of the archetype: the Earth Mother, for example, is recognizable in the lower-class, down-to-earth Lil, whose "motherhood" is the subject of conversation in the pub, while the Sibyl-Grail Bearer may be seen in the typist who enacts a sad decline not only from ritual to romance but also from romance to routine. The Sibyl of the epigraph derives from Petronius' Sibyl who is already a figure of degeneracy. Eliot applies Petronius' idea of characterizing the decline of contemporary social life by a disfigured mythic female. Though she is the female archetype and all characters melt into her in keeping with the underlying pattern of the quest, the Sibyl is not the only source of the many female characters in the poem. Women in The Waste Land may descend from mythic or legendary females found throughout literary history. Generally, the relation between descendent and source is ironic, for it is in the degradation of a mythic figure of the past that Eliot demonstrates the decadence of contemporaneity.

In a short essay almost contemporary with The Waste Land (appearing in Wyndham Lewis' Tyro the year before The Waste Land was published) Eliot addresses the question of mutations of myth in contemporary life. The essay, "The Romantic Englishman, the Comic Spirit, and the Function of Criticism," advances the view that it is the duty of the poet to keep the culture's controlling myths up to date. Eliot examines the mythopoeic atrophy of "our time." "Sir Tunbelly Clumsy, Sir Giles Overreach, Squire Western, and Sir Sampson Legend," he writes, "are different contributions by distinguished mythmakers to the chief myth which the Englishman has built about himself."[2] Fielding, Shakespeare, Tennyson, Squire, Chesterton, and Byron, he says, have all contributed to this myth. But, "in our time," Eliot reflects,

> the English myth is pitiably diminished. There is that degenerate descendent, the modern John Bull, the John Bull who usually alternates with Britannia in the cartoons of Punch, a John Bull composed of Podsnap and Bottomley. And John Bull becomes less and less a force . . . .[3]

It is these degenerate descendents of myth who populate the contemporary surface of The Waste Land and, remarkably, almost all of them are women. While the "young man carbuncular" may be a sorry, latter-day version of Aeneas or Perceval, and while Tiresias remains unchanged (or even somewhat aggrandized by his universal role as a visionary able to see a cultural decadence which spans the entire course of history), neither of these figures is solely central to the scenes he enacts or "sees." The clerk's quest leads us to the "automatic hand" of the typist and what Tiresias sees, in fact, "is."

Degeneracy is predominantly figured as female in The Waste Land: Madame Sosostris and the typist, for example, are "degenerate descendents" of the antique Sibyl who occupies the title page. Eliot uses his myth of woman to elucidate the otherwise inexplicable degeneracy of man. The "Romantic Englishman" may be, as Eliot says, "in a bad way," the result of a long decline, but in The Waste Land, his descent, his decadence, is attributed to "bad" women.

Eliot's mythic method may draw on literary or mythic figures who are already degenerate like Petronius' Sibyl, or like Aristophane's courtesan-nightingale, or it may disfigure heroic, legendary women such as Cleopatra or Queen Elizabeth I, so that the latter appears, in the poem, flirtatiously "beating oars" with Leicester. Generally, the female figure of The Waste Land is a diminished or trivialized form of the myth from which she descends, just as Pipit in "A Cooking Egg" is a diminutive, modern equivalent of Lucretia Borgia. Fresca appears to be a vulgarized, contemporary version of Dante's exemplary "carnal sinner," Francesca, who appears, revised, in an excised passage of "The Fire Sermon":

> Fresca! in other time or place had been
> A meek and lowly weeping Magdalene,
> More sinned against than sinning, bruised and marred,
> The lazy laughing Jenny of the bard.
> (The same eternal and consuming itch
> Can make a martyr, or plain simple bitch);
> Or prudent sly domestic puss puss cat,
> Or autumn's favourite in a tawdry gown,
> A doorstep dunged by every dog in town. (27)

In the process of demonstrating her "descent," Eliot not only traces the diminishing figure of the classic "carnal sinner," from Mary Magdalene to Francesca to D. G. Rossetti's prostituting Jenny; he also backtracks on the evolutionary path from "Magdalene" to "puss puss cat," from "martyr" to "bitch," subtracting from the character not only any suggestion of spiritual worth but any suggestion of spirit at all. Eliot traces an atavistic descent, from humanity to pure animality, making Fresca the lowliest "degenerate descendent" in The Waste Land. (But his attack on modern woman, in the caricature of Fresca, demonstrates his "personal . . . grouse against life" more than his manipulation of a parallel between antiquity and contemporaneity. As one critic observes, the Fresca passage is motivated chiefly by "a fearful horror of female sexuality.")[4]

Little research has been devoted to the female figure in The Waste Land and the only study I have found which concentrates exclusively on Eliot's women is Arthur Sampley's, "The Woman Who Wasn't There: Lacuna in T. S. Eliot." In a sketchy, sardonic discussion of Eliot's female characters, Sampley points out the absence of "lovable" women in Eliot's work, and, of the women in The Waste Land, he writes:

> The list of women who are unloved because they are unlovable begins with the bored woman in the Hofgarten, goes on to the unsavory fortune teller Madame Sosostris, the neurotic wife among her jewels and aphrodisiacs, the woe-begone Lil drooping from her abortion and bad teeth, the unresponsively responsive typist, and the three Thames Maidens who lose but do not mourn their virginity. Along with these are the wanton Elizabeth fondling her Leicester, and the Cassandra figure who fiddles music on the strings of her hair. If this is the land of the Fisher King and of the questing Sir Perceval, it is not strange that in the end the king was still fishing with the arid plain behind him.[5]

In addition to this article, I found occasional analyses of the female figure in The Waste Land included in studies devoted to more general topics. Esther Harding's Woman's Mysteries, which is concerned with the cult of the Magna Mater, offers a brief Jungian analysis of The Waste Land, but does not focus specifically on the female characters.[6] Genevieve Forster's study, "The Archetypal Imagery of T. S. Eliot," follows Harding's line of argument without developing her discussion of

Eliot's women.[7] Elizabeth Drew's archetypal study does not have a feminist perspective but occasionally draws attention to the poem's female figure. Drew observes of the poem's Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks, that she

> presumably symbolizes the quality of all the women in the poem. Like the woman in Gerontion, they are all the antithesis of the idea of fertility. Her name suggests poison and the numbing of sensitivity coupled with the aridity of rocks and a preference for "situations" instead of fruitful union.[8]

It is the purpose of this chapter to investigate the character of women in The Waste Land, to elucidate what Drew observes to be "the quality of all women in the poem" by closely examining the various faces of Eliot's female figure--Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks, the lady of situations--and by examining the generally ironic play between surface and symbol. The Lady of the Rocks, for example, signifies the legendary cave-dwelling Sibyl who occupies the mythic depths of the poem and whose character may be detected not only in the withered figure of the epigraph but also in the landscape imagery, the worn, barren, polluted "surface" of The Waste Land.

J. B. Vickery points out Eliot's "corruption" of the Sibyl. "Eliot," he writes,

> creates a link between Cumae and London, past and present, by showing that London contains its own contemporary Sibyls in the persons of the nameless lady of "A Game of Chess," Lil, and the typist. Each in her own way is confronted by an endless vista of misery, despair, and boredom. Each is a mute prophetess dramatizing the doom of a single aspect of the social order, a doom that is not physical death and dissolution but unending life and degradation.[9]

The Sibyl figure, as Vickery observes, personifies "unending life and degradation" in the modern city. Her atrophied character is also seen in the Sibylline landscape, the poisoned river and foul air of her underworld. It is the "chthonic" nature of Eliot's Sibyl, the generative anatomy of his Earth Mother, which emerges in the landscape imagery of the poem. The cave-like "room enclosed" belongs to the Lady of the Rocks, with her labyrinth of toxic aphrodisiacs that trouble and confuse the quester, and they are the lethal waters of Sibyl Belladonna which drown the Phoenician Sailor.

There are several women connected with water in the poem, including the hyacinth girl, who drenches her hair for purposes of charming or mourning, Madame Sosostris, who divines a watery death and who points to a deadly procession circulating over the Thames, and the Thames-daughters, who proceed to damn themselves as they proceed downriver. There are also mythic figures connected with the cave-boudoir, including Dido, in her smoky "laquearia," Cleopatra in her "burnished" throne room and the striking Medusa-like, fiery-haired woman in the shady "room enclosed." These are the queens of Hell.

The river meandering through The Waste Land belongs to the city of the dead and damned, the underworld city of modern London. Phlebas, the modern initiate, is submerged in these waters: he is borne by its tidal current, rising and falling, and forgetful of this life as though he had drunk from the waters of Lethe. But while the river of The Aeneid is a source of purgation, here it appears to be a source of poison.

It is a "dull canal" in which the quester finds himself fishing for the vital source of Life. The sewage from the gashouse adds to the "empty bottles, sandwich papers,/ Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends" dumped into the river following summer night festivities. And the pollution, whether industrial waste or garbage of a general "synthetic" nature, is given a feminine character. Only when the nymphs have departed does the river clear. The lethal waters of the Thames are associated with the contaminated waters of Babylon.[10] The "nymphs" passage may allude to the Epistle of the Galatians, where the "impure maid" is seen "cast out" before the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal" may be envisioned, "proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb."[11] It may also allude to the Revelation of John where the "whore," the anathematized carnal woman, is the "receptacle of all that is wicked and unclean." The waters of Babylon are polluted with her "fornication" and the curse upon the land is her curse.

The river nymphs of "The Fire Sermon" parody the bridal nymphs of Spenser's "Prothalamion," and their "pollution" is reflected in the passage of the Thames-nymphs. Cleanth Brooks explains:

> In Spenser's "Prothalamion" the scene described is also a river scene in London, and it is dominated by nymphs and their paramours, and the nymphs are preparing for a wedding. The contrast between Spenser's scene and its twentieth century equivalent is jarring. The paramours are now "the loitering heirs of city directors," and, as for the nuptials of Spenser's Elizabethan maidens, . . . the speech of the third of the Thames-nymphs summarizes the whole matter for us.[12]

One after the other, the Thames-daughters confess the scene of their seduction (Eliot notes that the three "speak in turn"), with each successive scene signifying progressive moral disintegration. They are accompanied by the Rhine-daughters lamenting the loss of their gold, which, in this context, signifies the loss of purity or of virginity. But the Thames-daughters are no guardians of gold; their violation is not forced upon them; rather, they acquiesce. They are Eliot's "deflowered maids" (101) who allude, in turn, to the "impure maid" of the Biblical waste land. According to Brooks, Weston points to a Grail legend which blames the curse of the land on the rape of the Grail maidens and the theft of their golden cups.[13] Eliot presents a seduction rather than a rape and maintains that "the curse of the land" is the consequence of female pollution.

The tale of the Thames-daughters marks a fall from "good" society. Their voices, singing in a series, trace a descent from upper middle class Richmond and Kew to the altogether less commanding Margate Sands. Collectively, these river nymphs represent a local and contemporary version of the figure of fallen womanhood so familiar to readers of late Victorian literature.

Gynaecological imagery appears most poignantly in this scene of the Thames:

The river sweats
Oil and tar
The barges drift
With the turning tide
Red sails
Wide.

The river, the "dull canal" sweating heavy pollutants, represents the vaginal canal of the poem's archetypal Earth Mother, entering the underworld city or the sea. Since the Thames is a tidal river, a sailor may be borne in either direction, both of which lead to a maternal "realm of the dead." "Red sails/ Wide" suggest an inflamed female sexual anatomy which coincides with the inflammatory character of the ladies of the boudoir in "A Game of Chess" and may represent the lust of the "impure maid," her openness to seduction. Sibylline cave mouths, it will be remembered, are characteristically bordered by red earth, signalling the entrance to the Earth Mother. The "Red sails" also recall the black sails of Isolde's ship and together, they represent what Eliot sees the nature of female love to be--physical and fatal. The "turning tide" is reflected in the wayward "drift" of the Thames-daughters, their descent into hell. The passage continues:

> The barges wash
> Drifting logs
> Down Greenwich reach
> Past the Isle of Dogs
> Weialala leia
> Wallala leialala

The word "wash" ironically connects the image of the polluted river with its "oil and tar," to the image of Mrs. Porter and her daughter who "wash their feet in soda water." Nothing is cleansed in the soiled Thames, and the quester who fishes for a spiritual source in the "dull canal" of "impure maids" is likely to be contaminated. It is not her feet Mrs. Porter washes in the Australian war ditty to which Eliot alludes. Grover Smith provides the words:

> The moon shines bright on Mrs. Porter
> And on her daughter:
> She washes out her ______ in soda water,
> And so she oughta,
> To keep it clean.[14]

The "Isle of Dogs" may refer to the mythic female, Scylla, a sea-monster, encircled with a ring of dogs' heads which savagely swallow sailors (according to Knight, she is an allegory of the life-devouring Earth Mother).[15] Odysseus navigates past her treacherous jaws only to head (like Phlebas) towards the whirlpool, to Charybdis, another mythic female. The "Dogs" may also refer to Cerberus (with three or fifty heads) guarding Hades and Persephone, and the Weialala leia of the Rhine-daughters may signify the sirens' song, eerily enchanting sailors to their sea-grave. Clearly, the entry of this Earth Mother is a dead-end passage, terminating in the underworld of the ever living dead and the eternally damned.

Eliot draws from traditional sources, both Biblical and classical, to create his own grotesque (but no less traditional) myth of female sexuality. It is poison; it is deadly; it is damning. It is the curse of the land, the embodiment of natural and artificial pollution, and the contamination of the vital source of life, at all levels. In the labyrinthine wilderness of "What the Thunder Said," it is a degenerate Earth Mother who emerges with her "Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit." Here, the jaws of death themselves are decayed; the Sibylline cave "mouth" can deliver neither oracles nor candidates of rebirth. Her archetypal nature is prefigured in the character of Lil, one of the local and "contemporary Sibyls," whose degeneracy is marked by her bad teeth and abortion. The chapel graveyard scene presents another degenerate image of female generative anatomy--"empty cisterns" and "exhausted wells"--corresponding to the "degenerate descendent" of the Grail bride, the woman who "drew her long black hair out tight." These images of the Sibyl and her cave signify a radical corruption of the female mysteries. Her "decayed hole in the mountains" is set clearly in antithesis to the Buddha's "mountain lake" whose "crystal clear" waters signify the highest level on a man's "path to redemption."[16]

This, then, is "the Lady of the Rocks" whose lethal and arid character Drew identifies. Her character may be further elucidated by referring to that petromorphic spirit which Walter Pater describes--"Lady Lisa"--who is "older than the rocks among which she sits." Grover Smith contends that Eliot derives his female archetype from Pater's poetic impression of Da Vinci's female archetype. "Leonardo's Madonnas" (the

"Lady of the Balances," the "Lady of the Lake," the "Lady of the Rocks," "La Gioconda," and "Saint Anne"), writes Smith, "are flanked by water and rock, are sibyls."[17] He confirms W. F. J. Knight's observation that Leonardo's "La Gioconda" is, indeed, a Sibyl. "It is not even really fanciful to wonder," Knight reflects, "not whether, but by what history and in what sense, Leonardo's Madonna of the Rocks, remembered by Eliot, is herself a sibyl."[18] To consider Eliot's "historical sense" of the "Lady of the Rocks," the greater part of Pater's famous passage is quoted here:

> The presence that rose thus so strangely beside the waters, is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years man had come to desire. Hers is the head upon which all "the ends of the earth are come," and the eyelids are a little weary. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions. Set it for a moment beside one of those white Greek goddesses or beautiful women of antiquity, and how they would be troubled by this beauty, into which the soul with all its maladies has passed! All the thoughts and experience of the world have etched and moulded there . . . the animalism of Greece, the lust of Rome, the mysticism of the middle age with its spiritual ambition and imaginative loves, the return of the Pagan world, the sins of the Borgias. She is older than the rocks among which she sits; like the vampire, she has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave; and has been a diver in deep seas, and keeps their fallen day about her; and trafficked for strange webs with Eastern merchants: and, as Leda, was the mother of Helen of Troy, and, as Saint Anne, the mother of Mary; and all this has been to her but as the sound of lyres and flutes . . . . The fancy of a perpetual life, sweeping together ten thousand experiences, is an old one . . . . Certainly Lady Lisa might stand as the embodiment of the old fancy, the symbol of the modern idea.[19]

Like the Sibyl, Pater's Lady Lisa "has been dead many times, and learned the secrets of the grave." And she has "trafficked . . . with Eastern merchants" who, reputedly, brought the worship of Cybele to Western civilization. But for all her "animalism," "lust" and "sins," Pater's

Magna Mater is also sublime. Like Hermas, he has double vision and perceives both Sibyl and Madonna in his female archetype.

Eliot's "symbol of the modern idea" is, like Pater's, drawn from antiquity, but like his one-eyed merchant, Eliot focuses on the idea of materialism which is the modern, degenerate vision of the Magna Mater. Eliot's "Lady of the Rocks" is a mockery of Pater's "Lady Lisa." The "Lady" in The Waste Land is also a "presence" associated with water, but she does not rise so much as fall, stimulating regret more than desire. As Earth Mother, hers may be the head "upon which all 'the ends of the earth are come,'" but "hers is the head" with the "dead . . . mouth," the corruption of man's ends, and therefore, the end of the world. And she is not just "a little weary" for she is dying, like the Sibyl in the epigraph. Her "strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions" are reflected in the opening passage of "A Game of Chess" with her "burning" aphrodisiacs and "her strange synthetic perfumes" (more toxic than intoxicating). She is troubling, in herself, and needs no illusory "white Greek goddess" to expose her essential decadence.

Although Eliot draws from a female figure such as Pater's, which conveys aspects of both Heaven and Hell, only the Hellish aspects are conveyed by his own female figure. He reveals his bias in an article reviewing Adlington's sixteenth-century translation of Apuleius' Golden Ass, quoting a passage "in which the translation is admirable," where the goddess appears before the hero:

> "Behold, Lucius, I am come; thy weeping and prayer have moved me to succor thee. I am she that is the natural mother of all things, mistress and governess of all the elements, the initial progeny of worlds, chief of the powers divine, queen of all that are in hell, the principal of them that dwell in heaven, manifested alone and under one form of all the gods and

> goddesses. At my will the planets of the sky, the wholesome winds of the sea, and the lamentable silences of hell be disposed; my name, my divinity is adored throughout all the world, in divers manners, in variable customs, and by many names."[20]

Eliot compares this passage to "a rather good Collect of the English Church" and to Latin hymns such as "Ave Maris Stella." He finds "the lamentable silences of hell" particularly excellent. It is the "historical sense" (i.e., of "developing" Nationalism and Protestantism) which Adlington provides, rather than the substance of Apuleius' prose, that intrigues the critic, but, in demonstrating the excellence of interpretation, he points only to the damning rather than to the merciful character of the goddess, censoring, as it were, the positive side of her omnipotence. He makes no reference to the famous passage which immediately follows, though it may exhibit an equally "admirable" translation:

> "Behold, I am come to take pity of thy fortune and turbulation; behold I am present to favour and aid thee; leave of thy weeping and lamentation, put away all thy sorrow, for behold the healthful day which is ordained by my providence."[21]

Robert Graves subsequently quotes the entire goddess passage of The Golden Ass, describing it as "the most comprehensive and inspired account of the Goddess in all ancient literature."[22] He, himself, subscribes to the romantic tradition of Apuleius which idealizes the mythic female. His White Goddess is a study of the archetype as it appears in triple form throughout mythopoeic history, for, as he explains, the goddess is seen in triplicate to accord with the seasons or the phases of the moon. Though she may appear in double form as well, the triple form is confined to the female deity and includes such mythic characters as the Moirae, the Gorgons, the Furies, Hecate, and Persephone.

Eliot's female figure appears in double and triple form, in caricature of the "white goddess." The lunar Maiden-Mother dyad is disfigured in the character of a mother-daughter prostitute team, "Mrs. Porter and her daughter"--contemporary ladies of the night, on whom "the moon shone bright." The Thames-daughters are three in number so that they will correspond, perhaps, to the three seasons of antiquity, though here there is an emphasis on the fall. Seasonal fall is a metaphor of the mythical Fall. The "lowly . . . Magdalene," Fresca, is "autumn's favourite," while the moral dissolution of the Thames-daughters is reflected in the break-up of summer's leafy canopy along the river and the "departure" of the nymphs:

> The river's tent is broken; the last fingers of leaf
> Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
> Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.

Woman's "fall" terminates in the collapse of all moral sensibility as it is presented in the pathetic image of the last Thames-nymph who

> . . . can connect
> Nothing with nothing.
> The broken fingernails of dirty hands.

Graves identifies the colors of Apuleius' triple goddess ("white and shining," "rosy red," "shining black") with the phases of the moon: "the New Moon is the white goddess of birth and growth; the Full Moon, the red goddess of love and battle; the Old Moon, the black goddess of death and divination."[23] The female figure of The Waste Land is colored red or black, exclusively. There are no "white" sails just as there is no holy "vessel" (like the Grail "Vessel," signifying female spirituality and regeneration) in The Waste Land. In the drafts, it is "*her* sails," *her* wayward (not "windward") "vessel" which would carry man to Hell (57). The "red" hyacinth girl with her "incarnadined" Hyacinths and the "black" Madame Sosostris with her divination of death present a formidable dyad. Furthermore, it is a nymph-crone, rather than a maiden-mother combination, to emphasize a seductive and sterile character. Eliot's colorful female trinity, "Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks,/ The lady of situations," traffics in blood and lust and death, though with declining capacity. Her degeneracy is indicated by the *absence* of the "principal" character of the archetypal triad, the "white goddess of birth and growth."[24] There is no maiden, no source of inspiration, which is why there is a curse on the people and their land, an extended winter season and only a barren femininity. (If a logical circularity is detected here, it may be a consequence of Eliot's misogyny: the female figure in *The Waste Land* appears to embody both cause and effect of human degeneration.)

Another female trinity appears in the drafts, in the excised section of "Death by Water":

> Three women leaning forward, with white hair
> Streaming behind, who sang above the wind
> A song that charmed my senses, while I was
> Frightened beyond fear, horrified past horror. . . . (67)

She rises from the sea like Apuleius' triple goddess and her character is both charming and chilling. Her enchanting song accompanies the "horror of the illimitable scream" indicating the fatal nature of her appeal. The mythic *femme fatale* with her dual character, at once enticing and threatening, is a traditional female figure found especially in literary romance. She can be seen in Apuleius, in Pater, in Graves and here, in Eliot, though the terrible aspect almost wholly overshadows the charming.

She can also be found in Plato who, in the last book of The Republic, presents an image of the sirens, in Hades, accompanying the singing Fates. Eliot's curious "three women" may represent the singing sirens and the screaming Fates, or Furies, who are closely akin to one another and periodically confused in literature.[25] Furthermore, the screaming trinity recalls Apuleius' description of "terrible Persephone," with her "deadly howlings" and her "triple face" which "hast power . . . to stop and put away the invasion of hags and ghosts which appear unto men."[26] It may be Persephone's "deadly howlings" which compose the "illimitable screams/ Of a whole [under]world" in The Waste Land. If so, she has lost the power to repell the "invasions of hags"; indeed, her triple-face is indistinguishable from that of the three sea-hags. It is a deadly female who haunts the tormented male in The Waste Land, be it the Medusa-like fiery-haired woman or the black-haired woman who is, herself, a succubas raising nightmares from the grave with her seductive "whisper music," or the white-haired women who strike fear and horror in the fisherman.

The goddess of the underworld, Graves explains, is "concerned with Birth, Procreation and Death," which triple function Eliot mocks in "Sweeney Agonistes" as "Birth, and copulation, and death." Closely related to this mythic form of the life cycle is Aphrodite's "whirling flux of life and death." Aphrodite is not a triple goddess but, like Apuleius' goddess, she rises from the sea ("foam-born") and she is the "Eldest of the Fates." "As Goddess of Death-in-Life," writes Graves,

> Aphrodite earned many titles which seem inconsistent with her beauty and complaisance. At Athens, she was called the Eldest of the Fates and sister of the Erinnyes; and elsewhere Melanis ("black one") . . . Scotia ("dark one"), Androphonos ("man slayer"); and even, according to Plutarch, Epitymbria ("of the tombs").[27]

Aphrodite appears in The Waste Land not only as a "degenerate descendent" of "Venus Anadyomene" in the caricature of Fresca (29), but also as a dark and somewhat diffusive presence. As the "Eldest of the Fates," Atropa, she appears in mortifying figures of woman, in, for instance, the dark, seductive, graveyard woman and in the ominous character of the "hooded" figure who is, indistinguishably, "man or woman." As Atropa Belladonna (the generic name of the Deadly Nightshade which is the basis of synthetic cosmetics worn by women), she appears in the toxic atmosphere of aphrodisiacs which "lurked" about the labyrinthine chambers of two regal femme fatales, Cleopatra and Dido. Eliot's queens derive not only from Shakespeare and Virgil, but also from Dante, who features them in his second circle of Hell, which is reserved for "carnal sinners." (Helen and Francesca are there too.) Eliot follows a tradition of disfiguring mythic women by confining them to Hell. Furthermore, he deprives their character of voice and personality, which is diffused into an atmosphere that is fiery, smoky, smothering, and stale--in short, Hellish.[28] This is a supreme form of female effacement: Eliot not only places his queens in Hell, but also "melts" them into Hell itself (or, by allusion, into Persephone, Queen of Hell).

The descent of this regal figure can be traced, through literary allusion, to Shakespeare's Cleopatra. The opening lines of "A Game of Chess" derive from these lines of the tragedy: "The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,/ Burned on the water . . . ."[29] Enobarbus describes the exquisite splendour of that "Rare Egyptian" who outstrips the beauty of nature, charms the elements and compares only to Venus herself. From her barge, "a strange invisible perfume hits the sense": this is, according to Enobarbus, Cleopatra's essence, a sweet, pervasive aphrodisiac with the power to intoxicate multitudes. Eliot's Cleopatra is a "degenerate descendent" of this enchanting female presence. She does not surpass nature but overwhelms it with her artificial cosmetics:

> . . . her strange synthetic perfumes,
> Unguent, powdered, or liquid--troubled, confused
> And drowned the sense in odours. . . .

Eliot parodies Enobarbus' description when he says of Cleopatra that "Age cannot wither her nor custom stale/ Her infinite variety."[30] Eliot's Cleopatra is accustomed, it seems, to a "rich profusion" of perfumes, of such variety, abundance and strangeness that the sense is strangled rather than invigorated. Odours and fumes arising from this synthetic concoction merge with the smoke from the candle flames and hang stale and heavy in the air "that freshened from the window." The atmosphere of the barge room is dense, oppressive and repelling in contrast to the breezy, uplifting and erotic air of Shakespeare's Cleopatra.

Eliot's Cleopatra is the very essence of decadence, lurking within her "room enclosed" which recalls the "smells of dust and eau de Cologne . . . female smells in shuttered rooms" of "Rhapsody on a Windy Night." She is self-confined in her sensual labyrinth, like the withered Sibyl in her bottle. The multiple reflecting materials of the room (the "burnished throne," "marble," "glass," "jewels," "colored stone," "copper," "ivory," and the "reflecting" table) recall Mallarmé's self-mirroring Queen Heriodiade who, in vain, attempts to conceal her age and mortality.

Eliot parodies Shakespeare's Cleopatra in an earlier poem "Burbank with a Baedeker, Bleistein with a Cigar" which includes an adaptation of these same lines from Enobarbus' speech: ". . . Her shuttered barge/ Burned on the water all day." Princess Volupine is here the "degenerate descendent" of Cleopatra, a morbid femme fatale who represents the decay of modern Europe, specifically, modern Venice. Eliot is unequivocal in his presentation of her as the source of the hero's (Antony-Burbank's) corruption: "They were together, and he fell." Once aristocratic, as only her name now suggests, Princess Volupine engages in high-class harlotry on an ascending commercial scale from Burbank's tourism to Bleistein's "Money in furs" to the financial empire of Sir Ferdinand Klein. She prostitutes her culture to the enterprising Jew without securing her declining aristocracy. Her upward mobility through the nouveau riche is marked by a diminishing vitality and an atavistic descent: she passes from the society of man to ape to rat into the "protozoic slime" at the bottom of the waterstair. Like the Sibyl, Princess Volupine embodies the plague of modern society, a demoralizing materialism, and, though she deteriorates steadily, she continues to lend a guiding hand, "[a] meagre, blue-nailed, phthisic hand," in mankind's sad decline.

Princess Volupine's fatal charm is figured in an image of "defunctive music" which echoes Cleopatra's "tune of flutes" that so enchanted and, perhaps, misguided Antony:

> Defunctive music under the sea
>   Passed seaward with the passing bell
> Slowly: the God Hercules
>   Had left him, that had loved him well.

This "defunctive music" is like the sirens' song, drawing men overboard and drowning the sense like the poisonous aphrodisiacs of the barge room in "A Game of Chess." It is an image that prefigures the "music [that] crept by me upon the waters" in The Waste Land which is composed of the sirens' song in "Death by Water" (in the drafts), the "whisper music" of the dark, seductive lady (Phlebas' bones, it will be remembered, are picked in "whispers," under the sea) and the lamenting wail of the fallen Thames- (Rhine-) daughters--and not Ariel's sweet song.

Eliot's Cleopatra is no sublime Venus; even the cupids of her exotic dêcor must hide their eyes from the scenes enacted on her divan. The "room enclosed" is less the throne room of a queen than the boudoir of a courtesan, or of a decadent sensualist. It is symbolic of her sexual character. Frazer suggests that a room without windows may symbolize virginity, while Cirlot indicates that windows signify a passage beyond.[31] The "room enclosed" does, indeed, have a window, and it is opened, symbolizing neither virginity nor transcendence but, like the "Red sails/ Wide," the woman's openness to seduction. And this is confirmed by the degradation of Philomel which is displayed in the room's mock window.

Eliot's note refers the "sylvan scene" to Milton's "Paradise Lost," so implying that the queens and Philomel and also the hyacinth girl (from another garden scene) all have a common ancestress: "the long opening passage [of part II]," writes A. D. Moody, "fills in a far-reaching background to this sad end to romantic love, associating the former hyacinth girl with the long line of femme fatales stretching back to Eve."[32] In Milton, Eve represents the morally inferior sex: weakening to temptation, she blinds and betrays man with carnal desire. Allowing Eve ("a cleaving mischief in his way to virtue") to guide him, Adam falls to disaster and death, helplessly drawn by the "link of Nature": "Against his better knowledge, not deceived/ But fondly overcome by female charm."[33] Or, as Eliot puts it, "They were together, and he fell." The consequence of Eve's sin in the garden of Paradise is the attainment of the knowledge of good and evil and that is expressed, according to Milton, as "sexual shame."[34] The "Hyacinths" scene may re-enact the Fall from Paradise: after the garden "event," the couple returns and the man is, in some sense, devastated. The analogy, however, is not straightforward, and the scene reflects more than one myth. Eliot couples the myth of the Fall and the myth of initiation, so that while the hyacinth girl may descend from Eve, she also descends from the Sibyl. She shows no "sexual shame" (a fact that reveals, perhaps, her moral inferiority), but merely recognizes her role as temptress. He, meanwhile, is cast in the part of the Dying God or the fallen Adam. He is troubled and confused in his dual role: in his blindness (which is spiritual as well as sexual, the blind passion of love) he knows nothing, and cannot judge whether sexual exchange is good or evil, though he apprehends, as either initiate or sinner, his "descent into Hell":

The "sylvan scene" displays another myth, "The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king/ So rudely forced . . . ." The event that initiates the change of Philomel is her rape, "so rudely forced," by the "barbarous king" Tereus. Classical literature shows no sympathy for the violated female of this myth. Ovid implicates the victim in the crime, and Aristophanes dramatizes her subsequent degradation, while The Waste Land does both: Eliot figures Philomela in the same "sylvan scene" as Milton's Eve, so indicating a mythic kinship based on the same female weakness and he depicts her metamorphosis in the conversion to a nightingale or prostitute, in the fashion of Mrs. Porter.

The mock window above the "antique mantel," which must be a tapestry or a painting, links the "room enclosed" to Imogen's bedchamber, in Shakespeare's Cymbeline: there, we are shown, through the eyes of

Iachimo, Imogen's would-be seducer, a tapestry displaying "proud Cleopatra, where she met her Roman," a roof fitted with "golden Cherubins" and andirons of "two winking Cupids," and a chimney piece showing "chaste Dian bathing" which correspond respectively to Cleopatra's burnished throne room, the "golden Cupidon" and the ironic allusion to "chaste Dian bathing" (Mrs. Porter washing her feet) in "A Game of Chess." The details of Imogen's bedchamber suggest feminine qualities of grandeur, love and chastity which are ironically diminished in the "room enclosed" that reeks of decadent sensuality. Iachimo is blind to feminine virtue, whether it is displayed in the details of the room or in Imogen's behaviour. He searches for signs of her wantonness, observing that

> . . . She hath been reading late
> The tale of Tereus. Here the leaf's turned down
> Where Philomel gave up.[35]

He concludes that, "though this is a heavenly angel, hell is here." Eliot adapts and conveys Iachimo's point of view (not Shakespeare's) that "hell is here" in a woman's bedchamber--be it the room of a queen or a "heavenly angel"--and that no woman is innocent, since even Philomel "gave up."

As the violated virgin, Philomel would be out of context in a poem where the female, with or without her aphrodisiacs, initiates (like the typist) or acquiesces (like the Thames-daughters) to an "event" of seduction. Ovid's account of Philomela's "rape" places the initial blame on her beauty, which is both natural and artificial, so that in the poem she figures as a synthesis of the hyacinth girl's natural lure and the artificial lure of the queens:

> . . . suddenly Philomela appeared, richly attired in gorgeous robes, but richer still in her own beauty. She was like . . . the naiads and the dryads who haunt the depths of the woodlands, if only they wore ornaments and garments such as hers. . . . A flame of desire was kindled in Tereus' heart when he saw her, flaring up as quickly as the fire that burns withered corn, or dried leaves, or stores of hay. Her beauty, indeed, was excuse enough . . . .[36]

Tereus is not unaccountable for his crime though it is prompted by a woman's charm, but his crime, as Ovid presents it, is more understandable than condemnable. The woman arouses little pity in him, nor in Eliot, who ridicules Philomela's metamorphosis in an image of the modern prostitute. Following her "rape," as Ovid tells it, Philomela threatens to "throw aside all modesty" and proclaim to the world the violence she has suffered. Tereus hastens to slash out her tongue and lock her in a tower where he continues to take "his pleasure with the body he had so mutilated." Eliot's Philomel throws aside all modesty "after the event" and becomes a modern call girl. The call of nature is neither silenced nor impaired by her defacement. She continues to appeal to the beastly, "barbarous" instincts in man" "And still she cried, and still the world pursues,/ 'Jug Jug' to dirty ears." Eliot's disfigurement of Ovid's nightingale reflects the acid irony of Aristophanes who ridiculed the myth by portraying the ravished Procne (the sisters appear interchangeably) "in the gay trappings of a courtesan with the mask of a nightingale."[37] Drawing from a scene in an "Aristophanic melodrama,"[38] Eliot contorts the metamorphosis of Philomela to demonstrate the degeneracy of the contemporary female. The misogynous undertones cannot be overlooked. Russell Kirk draws attention to the "reduction of woman" in the opening passage of "A Game of Chess":

> . . . the Seeker . . . stumbles into a boudoir. At first this room is mistaken for Cleopatra's, but really this is no chamber of grand passion and queenly power; it is only the retreat of a modern woman, rich, bored, and neurotic. On a wall, the picture of the metamorphosis of Philomel is a symbol of the reduction of woman to a commodity--often a sterile or stale commodity--in modern times. (The levelers would bring us down, Burke had said, to the doctrine that "a woman is but a woman; a woman is but an animal, and an animal not of the highest order.") Modern woman is ravished, but nowadays she is transformed into no sweet nightingale.[39]

The Waste Land presents the metamorphosis of Philomela in antithesis to the quester's (potential) purgation; with the "remaining stump" of tongue she calls to "dirty ears" in the depraved quarters of the modern city. She, apparently, becomes an aging Madame, and like the aging Sibyl, she keeps a decadent "house of death." The "staring forms" which "leaned out" suggest spectral soliciting figures in a bitter parody, perhaps, of Rossetti's "Blessed Damozel," who "leaned out/ From the gold bar of heaven." Eliot's figures solicit from the haunts of Hell. (In his 1929 essay on Dante, Eliot writes, "Rossetti's 'Blessed Damozel,' first by my rapture and next by my revolt, held up my appreciation of Beatrice by many years." At this stage in his writing, it appears that he is in "revolt.")[40]

Belladonna is a classic femme fatale. Whether she is derived from a legendary queen or from a myth of transformation, her archetypal female nature is destructive, if not depraved. The queen figure in The Waste Land is undermined by the emphasis on her seductive rather than her regal character. She embodies, it seems, only a sexual will, and is determined, by whatever ploys, to be sexually appealing (an "infinite variety" of "synthetic perfumes," for instance). Elizabeth I is implicated here as well, flirting with Leicester on another river barge.

"Queen Elizabeth I, another Cleopatra," writes Grover Smith, "is practically indistinguishable from Mrs. Porter, for both are subservient to lust."[41]

If uncontrolled, this nature may be a woman's social ruin as well as her damnation, as the Thames-daughters show. By her very nature she is bound to fall and nature makes no class distinction. It is embodied in the queens who, when frustrated, may threaten to walk the streets, like the Dido figure in the scene of the "Shakespeherian Rag." (Grover Smith compares the neurotic female of this passage to "frenzied Dido in her palace at Carthage when Aeneas abandoned her"[42] and J. B. Vickery sees her as a figure representing the "contemporary . . . prostitute.")[43] It is also embodied in the lower-class figure of Lil who risks her life in order to remain sexually attractive to her Albert.

In short, a woman's nature, as it is presented here, prevents her from being regal or in any way dignified, self-possessed. She degenerates, both morally and physically, not so much in spite of herself as in fulfilment of her natural destiny. Furthermore, she compels the fall of man. Hers is the "inviolable voice" of nature crying in a spiritual desert. She cannot really be violated, for like Eliot's Philomela she is damned from the outset, the source and embodiment of Original Sin, and though she deteriorates, she may do nothing to change. But while she is encaged in her natural degeneracy (as the Sibyl in the epigraph signifies), the real victim is man who, like the "Son of man," is responsible to a higher nature and who embodies free will or reason and is, potentially, the moral agent in any transaction between the sexes. He may abuse this faculty but through her initiation; she obliterates his guiding wisdom after the garden "event," she drowns his sense in the "room enclosed," she binds his questing spirit to the "Wheel." She is vexing (like the hyacinth girl), seductive (like the barge queens), indifferent (like the typist), corruptible (like the Thames-daughters), slatternly (like Fresca). He is "troubled, confused" and, when they are together, "he falls." She raises her knees and, afterwards, he weeps. Like Philomel, she ignites his animal nature and/or, like Madame Sosostris, she blinds him to his transcendent nature. Grover Smith confirms this observation:

> In one sense she herself has been the victim, untransformed into an "inviolable voice". But the real victim is the quester, who in the garden became the Fisher King through a failure symbolically equivalent to the crime of Tereus; it is he who has been silenced and, so to speak, spiritually mutilated.[44]

Eliot's Philomela is the archetypal "lady of situations," the lady, that is, who finds herself in a situation she has incited but cannot control. Ultimately, she acquiesces to her indomitable female nature, dons the mask of a nightingale, and occupies the haunts of the "lowest of the dead" in the underworld of a modern metropolis. There are several explicit prostitute figures in The Waste Land drafts, some of which are mocking images of mythic females. In part I of "He Do the Police in Different Voices," the protagonist meanders about a labyrinth of pubs and brothels arriving, at one point, at "Myrtle's Place" to "Get [himself] a woman," emerging, later, with "Trixie" and "Stella" in an "old cab" (the "old cab" reappears in Part II with the "closed cab" and the seductive game of chess, more sexual foul play). Trixie is undoubtedly a "degenerate descendent" of Dante's sublime Beatrice and Stella may claim descent from "Stella Maris," the star of Mary (or the star of Isis, the Dog Star). "Myrtle's Place," too, has its antecedents and it may be the modern corruption of Moeltre, the ancient center of goddess worship, according to Apuleius.[45] In "Death by Water," the fisherman (or sailor) descends to "Marm Brown's joint" with its "girls and gin," though he does not condescend to partake in the amusement ("I laughed not").

The promiscuity of the Thames-daughters appears to be their undoing: their passage down river enacts the fall of woman and demonstrates her essential depravity. Eliot treats the plight of the Thames-daughters as an "Aristophanic Melodrama," since ~~it~~ depends on the pathetic tone of the speaker and on the ridiculous image of the maiden damning herself with her knees raised "supine on the floor of a narrow canoe." But the moral message of the scene is conveyed in tragic undertones. Eliot writes, in "Thomas Middleton," that "what constitutes the essence of tragedy is . . . the _habituation_ . . . to sin . . . the deadening of all moral sense,"[46] which is to say that as long as a character is apprehensive of his sin he may be damned, but he is not a tragic figure. Tragedy occurs when sin "becomes no longer sin but merely custom." He points to a female character in Middleton's _Changeling_: "it is the _habituation_ of Beatrice to her sin," he explains, that makes her a tragic figure. She embodies an "unmoral nature" which is made "moral" only through damnation: "Beatrice is not," Eliot writes, "a moral creature; she becomes moral only by becoming damned."[47] The Thames-daughters, like the other women in _The Waste Land_, reflect this "unmoral nature" and melt into Cybele's "cauldron of unholy loves." They are damned in the tradition of St. Augustine, but they themselves express no "horror" or "shame." They are moral only insofar as they are damned but their complacency, in the face of their undoing, makes them tragic. The man in the scene of the "event" may be only melodramatically penitential, but he, at least, acknowledges his immorality: "He wept. He promised 'a new start'./ I made no comment. What should I resent?" He is a comic, Aristophanic figure; but she is tragic, reflecting a "deadening of all moral sense." Lyndall Gordon identifies the penitential cry, "O Lord thou pluckest me out," as belonging to the questing male, in antithesis to the "dirty" cry of the nightingale belonging to the "unmoral" female. "The penitent confesses," she writes,

> in the manner of Augustine, to his idle lusts, and his sense of sin propels him smoothly into the burning routine. There is no concern for the abused London women, only for his own purification.[48]

It should by now be evident that Eliot's portrayal of woman as exclusively natural, primarily sexual, deprives her of moral capacity. This woman is animated with an "inviolable," damnable nature that cannot be purged: she is, as Burke describes woman, "but an animal and an animal not of the highest order." She shows no knowledge of good or evil, which Eliot asserts to be the telling factor distinguishing man from animals.[49] Can intercourse with her, then, be distinguished from "the copulation of beasts"? She is the anima, the "woman's part," that de-moralizes man. The beastly aspect of woman is especially seen in Fresca, who, as a "domestic puss puss cat," is not only a "degenerate descendent" of hell-cat Hecate,[50] with a "hearty female stench," but also a close relative of Eliot's own Grishkin, the natural female of "Whispers of Immortality." Of this less "domestic" creature, Eliot writes:

The sleek Brazilian jaguar
Does not in its arboreal gloom
Distil so rank a feline smell
As Grishkin in a drawing-room.

Fresca has no moral sensibility, no genuine feeling, only "unreal emotion and real appetite." Nor is she a candidate for enlightenment, since "Women intellectual grow dull,/ And lose the mother wit of natural trull" (27). Like her sisters, the Thames-daughters, Fresca engages in "unholy" love and like her predecessor, Francesca, she is too degenerate to be reserved a place in the refining fire of purgatory. She is, clearly, Hell-bound.

"To understand . . . the sexual act as evil," writes Eliot, "is more dignified, less boring, than as the natural, 'life-giving' cheery automatism of the modern world."[51] He displays this modern trait of sexual automatism in the mechanical routine of the typist (which is a parody of the Mystery ritual). But she is not cheery like Fresca who "dreams of loves and pleasant rapes," and who "caress[es] the egg's well-rounded dome" with as "automatic [a] hand" as the typist's. Like all women in The Waste Land, she is not "life-giving" but life-degrading.

Eliot suggests, by allusion, a cure for the demoralized relation between the sexes as he presents it in The Waste Land. The typist passage includes the opening line of the well-known song from Goldsmith's Vicar of Wakefield:

> When lovely woman stoops to folly,
>   And finds too late that men betray,
> What charm can soothe her melancholy,
>   What art can wash her guilt away?
>
> The only art her guilt to cover,
>   To hide her shame from every eye,
> To give repentance to her lover,
>   And wring his bosom--is to die.

In view of the "unmoral nature" of Eliot's woman, the implication of this allusion is that for her to "become moral" she must not only be damned but she must also die. In so doing, she would secure "his" repentence and redeem her shame in the eyes of the living.

Some of Eliot's female characters are indeed dying, though not by choice or by moral, free will. The Sibyl wants to die, but only because she is dying already and finds her deterioration unbearable. (It is by Apollo's will that she is dying and that her "chthonic" powers are failing, in a mythic-historical process of Olympian enlightenment.)[52] Lil would rather do herself in than lose Albert to another woman, and this situation most clearly shows that women are their own worst enemies. It is Lil's "confidante" who advises her to proceed with sex and life-draining childbearing, threatening to seduce her husband if she fails to follow this advice:

> . . . he wants a good time,
> And if you don't give it him, there's others will,
> I said.
> Oh is there, she said. Something o' that, I said.
> Then I'll know who to thank, she said, and give
> me a straight look.

Above the gossip and chatter of Lil's "friend" and other pub "ladies," the bartender's voice may be heard. It may also be seen, printed in upper case letters not only to signify volume but also to underline the "culmination" of the message of part II, which is directed to women, in general: "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME"--to die. One of these ladies, at least, complies with this appeal--Ophelia, to whom the last line alludes.[53] She stands in inverse relation to the hyacinth girl, drowning herself in water and flowers that otherwise signify life and fecundity. Her suicide does not, here, imply a moral action: from the perspective of The Waste Land, she is naturally compelled to choose a self-damning death over life in a nunnery.

Eliot's sense of woman's "unmoral nature" reflects the bitter observation that Posthumous makes when he learns of Imogen's seduction. Although Imogen (like Ophelia) is guiltless, Posthumous subscribes to a traditional view of women, condemning her outright and falsely:

> Could I find out
> The woman's part in me! For there's no notion
> That tends to vice in man but I affirm
> It is the woman's part. Be it lying, note it,
> The woman's; flattering, hers; deceiving, hers;
> Lust and rank thoughts, hers, hers; revenges, hers;
> Ambitions, covetings, change of prides, disdain,
> Nice longings, slanders, mutability,
> All faults that man may name, nay, that hell knows,
> Why, hers, in part or all, but rather all.[54]

Eliot's Waste Land materializes Posthumous' threat to "write against them,/ Detest them, curse them." Imogen is to Posthumous what Miranda is to Ferdinand, a virtuous, sybilline figure who guides her hero/lover through a saving transformation by means of love and wisdom. No such woman emerges in The Waste Land. Instead Eliot maintains the point of view of traditional misogyny, effacing and condemning the "woman's part."

* * * *

Eliot demonstrates the decadence of contemporaneity in multiple figures of woman, whose decadence is conveyed by a mindless, unmoral and vociferous character drawn in opposition to the meditative, demoralized, "silent" figure of the questing man. "The Waste Land," as Anne Bolgan and many other critics observe, "reveals itself to be a collage of voices"[55] and Eliot creates a distinctive voice for his woman. Her degeneracy is amplified by a vocal histrionics which is antagonistic to the dispassionate spirit of the quest.

The woman's voice typecasts her character: there is, for instance, the cool, callous voice of the typist, to fit a stereotype of efficiency and expediency ("'Well now that's done, and I'm glad it's over'"); the gossipy, Cockney voice exposing a power class, public-house mentality ("'What you get married for if you don't want children?'"); the confessional (but unrepenting) voice of the local femme fatale ("'Richmond and Kew/ Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees . . .'"); the hysterical, nagging voice of the neurasthenic wife ("'My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me./ Speak to me . . .'"); and the affected scatter-brained babble of the bored socialite:

> I went last night--more out of dull despair--
> To Lady Kleinwurm's party--who was there?
> Oh, Lady Kleinwurm's monde--no one that mattered--
> Somebody sang, and Lady Kleinwurm chattered. (23)

All of Eliot's women are reduced to caricatures and, as such, have nothing profound to communicate. Their voices are only for display and they expose an abysmal ignorance. Madame Sosostris, charlatan "clairvoyante," prophesies death without a moment's reflection. The Thames-daughters tell their lamentable tale without any moral apprehension. The hyacinth girl recalls her public appearance in a ritual event but recollects nothing about the event itself. And before commenting on the day's routine, the typist's "brain allows one half-formed thought to pass." The woman of the "nerves" scene anxiously commands the man to think, though she offers no thoughts herself:

> . . . Why do you never speak? Speak.
> What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
> I never know what you are thinking. Think.

When he thinks, he is mute, and when she speaks, she is unthinking. Grover Smith observes that

> Eliot's own reading of Part II differentiates carefully between the shrill, rasping voice of the lady and the detached, melancholy voice of her husband. The absence of quotation marks from the man's lines probably means that in reality he does not answer at all, and only meditates his thoughts.[56]

Their failure to communicate exposes the deterioration of the relation between the sexes and an essential incompatibility. "The man's responses," writes A. D. Moody,

> which see in her state or in their state together the reason for terror and despair, make him the woman's opposite. . . . He sees the horror, but feels nothing; while she feels it without knowing why.[57]

They are not merely opposed to one another; they are mutually antagonistic. Her voice is another expression of the "inviolable voice" of nature crying in a spiritual desert, for when she speaks she evokes an image of the waste land (Ezekiel's valley of the dead) in the man's mind:[58] "'I think we are in rats' alley/ Where the dead men lost their bones.'" She speaks without thinking and feels without knowing, since she has, apparently, no reasoning capacity, no moral foresight. She is, perhaps, a "degenerate descendent" of the irrational Moirae, whose primitive, "unmoral nature" will not be crossed.[59] He, conversely, descends from the "Son of man," who, like the prophet of Ecclesiastes (Eliot's notes refer to both Ecclesiastes and Ezekiel) recoils from nature's "vanity and vexation," especially as it is embodied in a woman.[60] His refusal to speak reflects his refusal to partake in any form of intercourse with her, which, in turn, sparks a raving Fury.

Female voices in The Waste Land exemplify what Eliot identifies as the "third voice" of poetry, the "dramatic" voice, the voice of "one imaginary character addressing another imaginary character," but not saying what the poet "would say in his own person."[61] The distinction between the first two voices, he proceeds to explain, "between the poet speaking to other people and the poet speaking to himself, points to the problem of poetic communication." The problem of poetic communication in The Waste Land is confined to male voices which melt into the voice of the male "personage." Whether mute and self-reflective, like Eliot's "first voice" in which the poet speaks to himself, or commanding and directing like the second voice addressing an audience, the voice of the poem is masculine. Female voices are strictly "dramatic" and do not communicate the conscience of the poet; poet and "personage" are intimately linked in the expression of a moral dilemma in which woman plays the antagonizing part.

Woman's voice is most histrionic in the "nerves" scene where she appears to intimidate her male companion into silent withdrawal. Once before, man had been silenced in a scene with a woman, with the hyacinth girl on his return from the garden. Here, however, he knows what he did not know before, that life between the sexes is degenerate and deadly, a bitter stalemate.

Throughout parts II and III the voice of the man is drowned out in the cacophony of female voices. "The Fire Sermon" opens with his lyrical voice, singing a short, sweet lament--"Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song,/ Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long"--which is interrupted by the blast of "horns and motors" bringing "Sweeney to Mrs. Porter" each spring and signifying by that action the crude exhibition of sexual routine in the decadent modern city. Bird noises heard in the proximity of Mrs. Porter and her daughter--"twit twit twit/ jug jug jug jug jug jug"--recall the "change of Philomel" from maiden ("daughter") to nightingale ("Mrs. Porter") and imply a female character that is both bird-brained (twitty) and lewd (crying "'jug jug' to dirty ears"). The lyrical voice of man does not recover but is lost in the loud, long, lamentable song of the Thames- (Rhine-) daughters; and it is not Ariel's song which the "personage" hears in "this music [which] crept by me upon the waters," but the music of the typist's gramophone which, like the Shakespeherian Rag, is "defunctive"--the solicitous song of modern woman. Together, with the woman who "fiddled whisper music," these women comprise Fresca's "Muses nine." Their water songs are lethal, luring man "under the sea" to pick his bones in whispers. The musical women of Eliot's Waste Land are "degenerate descendents" of the Muses and closely akin to the "daughters of Musick" of Ecclesiastes' waste land, who characterize the fatal appeal of sensual life and of the turbulent routine of nature. The man so drawn forgets his spiritual life and loses his self-possession. "More bitter than death,"[62] Eliot's femme fatales bring untimely devastation upon man and tamper with his bones (or what A. E. Housman would call his "immortal part").

The music creeping over the waters recalls the haunting, charming song of the sirens which, like the "inviolable voice" of the nightingale, signifies an irresistible female nature. In the drafts, the song of the mythic bird-women blends with the "illimitable scream of a whole world" which, one critic observes, is "the whole natural world."[63] "Death by Water" may contain an allusion to Chapter CXXVI of Melville's Moby Dick, with its "wild, thrilling sounds" of mermaids which transfix a crew of sailors and which, according to the "oldest mariner," signify the voices of "newly drowned men in the sea."[64] The song of the Rhine-daughters, "weiala la leia/ Walla la leia la la," seems to convey a significant emotion that is alarming, mournful, charming. Mermaids are mythic creatures whose origin may be traced to Aphrodite,[65] whose presence in The Waste Land is manifested in the fatal and "illimitable" attraction of the female sex.

Men and women do not converse in The Waste Land. They may speak in turn, as in the "Hyacinths" scene or, more often, the woman addresses the man in dramatic monologue as in the "nerves" scene and the scene with Madame Sosostris. Women do not converse among themselves. The Thames-daughters "speak in turn," and when Lil's confidante holds forth, she monopolizes the scene with her loud-mouthed prattle (in a Cockney accent which not only caricatures the popular image of the gossipy, lower-class English female but also parodies the oracular function of the Sybil). When the woman addresses the man, he does not reciprocate. The only meaningful exchange engendered in the poem proceeds between God and man (Da: Datta; Da: Dayadhvam; Da: Damyata), which dialectic bears the fruit of their communion, the moral (transforming) knowledge: "Give, sympathize, control."

The voices of men and women are only heard in opposition: they do not merge into the singular voice of Tiresias. "Eliot's notes," observes A. D. Moody,

> misleadingly helpful as ever, direct attention only to Tiresias in whom the several male voices merge. But I do not find that the women meet in him as the note would have it.[66]

Female characters do not melt into a "personage" which manifests a "wise old man" archetype and which unifies the voices of gods, prophets and saints. Anne Bolgan identifies this prophetic voice as Eliot's "impersonal voice" with a "god-like presence behind it."[67] Authoritative and patriarchal, it can be heard throughout The Waste Land speaking, for instance, in the voice of the Old Testament God:

> what are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
> Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
> You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
> A heap of broken images. . . .

Or it may be heard in the voice of the thunder (the Upanishad God) delivering his sharp, single syllable, "DA," or in the voice of the saint, "O Lord Thou pluckest me out," rising above the voices of "unholy loves which sang about [his] ears." (Apparently, the "cult of the Magna Mater" captivates only "dirty ears.")

These controlled, masculine voices are clearly distinguished from the whispering, murmuring, wailing, babbling, bored voices of women as well as from the limp and dejected voice of the Sibyl. The Sibyl of the Satyricon wastes away until she is nothing more than a voice. It is her voice, the oracular voice of mother nature, that is heard in the various voices of women in The Waste Land. Eliot's women voice natural concerns which the Buddha condemns in his "Fire Sermon": they are impassioned "with birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief and despair."[68] The voice of man, as A. D. Moody observes, does not express these passions but reflects, impersonally and dispassionately, on the wasted condition of man.

The prophetic voice appears to be addressed exclusively to men either within the poem (to the "Son of man" or, by allusion, to the male groups which alternately invoke the Upanishad God) or to a fraternal reading audience. Eliot's second voice emerges in the Baudelairean line, "'You! hypocrite lecteur!--mon semblable,--mon frère!'" warning and admonishing like the voice of the Old Testament God and like the voice addressing the *semblables* of Phlebas: "O you who turn the wheel and look to windward/ Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you." The poet implicitly warns his fellows not to lose control of the wheel to women who, like Madame Sosostris, manipulate "the Wheel" with neither control nor understanding. She is but a grave pretender who manages only to seal man's fate and misguide his fortune and she represents the bewitching character of every woman in *The Waste Land*. As sorceress or enchantress, Belladonna has, apparently, "drowned the sense" of, at least, one once-decent man, in a sensual, turbulent, natural way of life.

The man is, originally, silenced before the woman; he stands dumbfounded before the hyacinth girl and mute before the hysterical woman. His soft, sad song is overwhelmed by her wailing. By the end of the poem, however, this situation is reversed. The pub "ladies" are hushed and dispersed by the firm, managerial voice of the bartender in part II and, following the "sermon" culminating in part III, a woman's voice is not heard again. The fisherman, in the manuscript of "Death by Water," nullifies the voice of the sirens by coolly controlling his senses.

The thunder is the "culmination" of prophetic voices, delivering the three DAs in a "dry, sterile" tone that reflects the message of asceticism (in the prayer of the saints and in the gesture of the fisherman) and, as such, radically opposes the wet, fecund, female character dominating the beginning of the poem. In a "higher" sense, it is not "sterile," for it implants the seed of moral wisdom in communion with man. Conversely, intercourse with Eliot's naturally degenerate female seems fruitless and forbidding. Sordid sexual imagery conveys what Eliot ascribes to the "dead wife" in *The Family Reunion*--"a horror of women as of unclean creatures."[69] "Red sails/ Wide" signal a "lower," animal appeal of a female body corrupted by indiscriminate sex and strange synthetics. It is her "dull canal" the quester must enter in his hopeless labyrinthine quest for rebirth; her "dead . . . mouth" and "decayed hole" can deliver nothing but foul speech and damned souls.

The nightingale's voice is not the only call of nature animating *The Waste Land*. There is also the "water-dripping song" of the hermit-thrush, promising water but leading only to the desert:

> . . . the hermit thrush sings in the pine trees
> Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
> But there is no water

The deceptive character of the hermit-thrush reflects the character of the hyacinth girl, who promises spiritual nourishment, love or inspiration, but initiates only a dull and deadly routine, represented, ironically, by a *watery* desert, the vast and barren sea.

Bird song, in *The Waste Land*, signifies betrayal. The hermit-thrush and the nightingale deliver calls of nature which detract man from his "higher" calling and lead him to a spiritual desert, the "arid plain" of the ancient holy lands or its contemporary image, the depraved quarters of the modern city. Thrush and nightingale are mythically linked to the swallow appearing in the poem's coda in a line taken from the *Pervigilium Veneris*. Eliot's note indicates that the swallow is related to "Philomela in Parts II and III." In the invocation to Venus, it is Procne's raucous love song which overwhelms and subdues the voice of man who would aspire to a condition of rejuvenating, liberating, self-determination. A. D. Moody provides the relevant passage:

> Now the raucous swan song sounds on the lake: the girl of Tereus pours forth her music from the poplar shade, as if moved to tell of love, not to lament her sister and the barbarous husband. . . . Hers is the Song, and we are silent: when will my spring come? When shall I become as the swallow that I may cease to be silent?[70]

The "personage" of The Waste Land expresses, through this allusion to the Pervigilium Veneris, a lamentable silence like that which the man had experienced in the "Hyacinths" scene. But he also forsees the day when he will possess a voice of his own, rise above the call of nature with its raucous swan song--the wailing, screaming, crying, charming voice of impassioned, "natural" woman--and aspire to the condition of music, transcendental, pure spirit.

The "swallow" line of the coda may also be read in conjunction with a line from Ecclesiastes where it is prophesied that the spirit of man, in its dissolution, "shall rise up at the voice, and all the daughters of musick shall be brought low."[71] The Waste Land exposes the desert of modern life in an image of mankind rising with "dirty ears" to the voice of the nightingale-call girl and foreshadows the time when Fresca's "Muses Nine," the Rhine-daughters and the woman fiddling "whisper music" will be "brought low" with the fall of modern Babylon.

The nightingale signifies the degeneracy of woman and the fall of man through adaptation and distortion of the Philomela myth, while the hermit-thrush signifies the betrayal of man through a symbolic manipulation of the myth of the "Son of man." The hermit-thrush "sings in the pine-trees" just as the cock stood on the roof tree," crowing, "co co rico co co rico," signifying the betrayal of Christ.

The culminating image of betrayal, by deceptive and degenerate nature, emerges in the excised passage of "Death by Water" where the mythic bird women, the sirens, white-haired and haggard, rise from the barren and deserted sea and lodge themselves in the "fore cross trees," singing their charming, devastating song. Ultimately, it is a female figure which embodies and explains the dissolute and desperate condition of mankind in The Waste Land. By combining and manipulating the myth of Odysseus, the "Myth of Man" and the "Myth of the Fall" to show contemporary decadence, Eliot creates a myth of woman whose character as *femme fatale* locates his poem squarely in the misogynous tradition.

CHAPTER III

TRADITION: "CONSTANT VITUPERATIONS OF THE FEMALE"

The Waste Land is the culmination of a misogynous trend in Eliot's early poetry and the outgrowth of a misogynous literary tradition that characterizes the late nineteenth century. Eliot demonstrates the significant influence of Baudelaire and the French Symbolists whose work is marked by what he himself describes as "constant vituperations of the female."[1] An examination of Eliot's pre-Waste Land poetry and of the influence of the symbolist-decadent movement on his work will help elucidate the misogynist tradition out of which The Waste Land was written.

As early as 1908, Eliot creates mythic femme fatales. "Circe's Palace," for instance, presents a Circe-like female figure modelled both on Odysseus' sibylline enchantress, who turns men into swine, and on Frazer's "cruel goddess" or temple priestess, who annually demands a male sacrifice. She is not so much a character as a presence, lurking ominously among hideously stained, blood-red flowers, and she foreshadows the hyacinth girl:

> Around her fountain which flows
> With the voice of men in pain,
> Are flowers that no man knows.
> Their petals are fanged and red
> With hideous streak and stain;
> They sprang from the limbs of the dead.--
> We shall not come here again.[2]

Eliot had read Frazer by this time[3] and was evidently impressed with the description of the fatal feminine power which initiated the ritual of the dying Adonis or Hyacinthus, "personated by a living man who died a violent death in the character of the god," and with the explanation of the primitive vegetative concept of masculine spirit. "What more natural," writes Frazer, in reference to the ritual sacrifice of men, "than to imagine that the violets and the hyacinths, the roses and the anemones, sprang from their dust, were empurpled or incarnadined by their blood, and contained some portion of their spirit?"[4] Frazer proceeds to quote from Edward Fitzgerald's "Rubaiyat":

> I sometimes think that never blows so red
> The Rose as where some buried Caesar bled;
> That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
> Dropt in her lap from some once lovely Head.

Eliot's verse reflects and adapts this primitive concept of reincarnation in a metaphor of sexual love, exposing its brutal and fatal nature which "no man knows." The fountain and flowers suggest the goddess' sanctuary, her "palace" of love. But they are animated with a suffering male spirit sacrificed to woman, whose savage, carnal nature is signified by the "fanged and red" character of the flowers, "incarnadined" with man's blood. The disillusioned speaker of Eliot's poem declares his permanent retreat from sexual love in an address to his lover: "We shall not come here again." He forsees a potential victimization that is as dehumanizing as it is deadly, the degradation of "some once lovely Head[s]" of "men whom we knew long ago," for the female archetype in his mind is both Atropa-Aphrodite and sibylline Circe, whose charm guides men through an atavistic descent, transforming their once noble spirit into the beastliness of lusty animals:

> Panthers rise from their lairs
> In the forest which thickens below,
> Along the garden stairs.
> The sluggish python lies;
> The peacocks walk, stately and slow,
> And they look at us with the eyes
> Of men whom we knew long ago.[5]

The frozen moment in the hyacinth garden may reflect the same horror that is indicated by the speaker in "Circe's Palace." In the earlier poem, however, there is no image of love or inspiration, no "heart of light," but only an exposure of the woman's demoralizing nature.

Eliot's early poetry reflects a variety of female stereotypes, including those arising from an American literary tradition (particularly from Poe, who is, it will be remembered, the beginning of the tradition Eliot saw as stretching through the French Symbolists, and including himself). Among his stereotypes are the "gushy romantic" and the "languid socialite" as well as the "dark enchantress" which dominates "Circe's Palace." "The sinister and emasculating witch who presides over this garden of experience," writes Lyndall Gordon,

> gathers strength from Madeline Usher and Rappaccini's daughter, who radiate an energy that Poe and Hawthorne regard as dangerous, perverse, or abnormal. Male American writers (with the notable exception of James) do not readily conceive heroines with the depth and humanity they regularly accord to their great heroes. Eliot's earliest heroines followed a tradition in which women exist as stereotypes of poison or saccharine, devouring energy or sickly pallor.[6]

Female figures in The Waste Land derive from cultural and literary stereotypes as well as from mythic archetypes. There are, for instance, the gossipy, working class woman, the routine and mechanical typist, and the scatter-brained, decadent socialite, Fresca, who is the embodiment of numerous female stereotypes and the butt of Eliot's accumulated misogyny. "A traditional way of coping with woman common in in the literature and theology of the West," observes Gordon,

> is to fix her image according to sinner and saint stereotypes, never allowing her full humanity. In The Waste Land manuscript Eliot blithely writes off women with their 'unreal emotions and real appetite' . . . .[7]

(In a footnote, she quotes Leslie Fiedler, who attributes such "perfunctory and forced cataloguing of females according to stereotype" to a "secret hate" of women.)[8] Although Eliot's poetic strategy becomes more complicated, his portrayal of women does not, necessarily, become fuller or more real. Despite a sophisticated expression of the "art of caricature," which Anne Bolgan discerns in The Waste Land,[9] Eliot continues to rely upon traditional and literary prejudices in his creation of female characters. His poetry reveals a lack of "empirical interest" in real women, let alone sympathy with the historical struggle of feminists and female intellectuals which had reached a climax during the period of his early work. On the contrary, despite his acquaintance with "spirited and intelligent women,"[10] he reveals a preoccupation with the stereotype of female mindlessness. That preoccupation was well established in his work before he wrote The Waste Land. "In 'Conversation Galante' (November 1909), 'Humouresque' (November 1909) and the unpublished 'Convictions' (June 1910)," writes Gordon,

> Eliot tries to demonstrate in dramatic scenes the shoddiness of women's minds and the poverty of their conversation. He places his women in sentimental situations, beneath a moon, surrounded by tissue-paper roses, exchanging the usual banalities, compliments, guesses, and promises--only the moon is bored and the conversation monotonous. He imagines in these poems a twittering, self-absorbed woman yearning to engulf a man in emotional claims and tells us in one of these early pieces that female readers drip tears of sentimental gratification at such scenes.[11]

While Eliot was "subtle and Jamesian in his analyses of gentleman's consciousness," Gordon observes, he "lacked insight" into the female mind and "chose" to

> write about woman as a baffling and alien creature, frozen in an image with exotic secrets but no ideas. 'Beyond the circle of our thoughts she stands,' wrote Eliot in January 1909.[12]

Eliot may neglect to detail the quality of female intellectual or moral consciousness but he gives scrupulous attention to the victimized sensibilities of man, whether he is "pinned and wriggling on the wall," like Prufrock in the intimidating company of women, or trapped in "an atmosphere of Juliet's tomb," like the male persona in "Portrait of a Lady." The interest of these early poems, notes Gordon,

> lies not in the woman but in her effect on the potential lover. He is uneasily aware that the woman points up his pallid appetite for what others might readily desire but is, at the same time, defensively scornful of her taste, conversation, and brains. Prufrock has fleeting erotic sensations--the perfume from the woman's dress or her arms moving to wrap her shawl or throw it off can whip his attention from his foggy self-absorption--but she is not capable of a real exchange and is therefore unworthy of his confession. In 'Portrait' the youth finds himself set to act in a darkened room with candles. He is ill at ease and bored (with the 'tom-tom' of a headache coming on). . . .[13]

Eliot's treatment of the male persona in "Prufrock" and "Portrait" is satirical, not sympathetic. He mocks Prufrock's sexual intimidation and social incompetence and ridicules his intellectual retreats and romantic fantasizing. But Prufrock, at least, possesses an educated mind and the capacity for self-reflection. His character is not informed by traditional stereotypes: Prufrock is a genuine caricature of the time, a local phenomenon akin to Charlie Chaplin and Laforgue's Pierrot, but irreducible to any generalization (unlike the female figure, who is reduced, stereotypically, to a superficial socialite or to a sensual monster, the mermaid). In "Portrait of a Lady," Eliot actually draws a picture of a gentleman, another victim of shallow and unsettling femininity. Although Eliot may ridicule the affectations of his male "aesthete" as much as he does those of his female counterpart, he presents only the speaking male's consciousness, only his version of their mutual façade. Perceiving the collapse of his masculine self-possession in close contact with an overwhelming "feminine" sentimentality, the young man of "Portrait" finds asylum in a public, male world of tobacco, newspapers and beer. But the lady's persistent and intensifying histrionics provoke hysteria in him. She stupefies his moral sensibilities and drives him to what he sees as inarticulate, inhuman response:

> And I must borrow every changing shape
> To find expression . . . dance, dance
> Like a dancing bear,
> Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape.

That atavistic decline, familiar from some of Eliot's earliest work and figured in the descending garden stair of "Circe's Palace," is central in Prufrock's "Love Song" too. He expresses the same sudden flight from the society of women to primitive unconsciousness. Moving towards the "arms" that so terrify him, Prufrock feels, in reaction, as dehumanized as "a pair of ragged claws/ Scuttling across the floor of silent seas."

In "Hysteria" and "Conversation Galante," Eliot parodies romantic relations between the sexes. While a satirical treatment of romantic or ideal sexual love does not in itself indicate misogyny, Eliot's attack is exclusively on the female figure. It is her "sentimental" moon in "Conversation Galante," for instance, which is reduced to "an old battered lantern hung aloft/ To light poor travellers to their distress," just as it is the Sibyl, another idealized symbol of female mystery, fertility and inspiration, who is reduced to an old, withered hag "hung aloft" in a cage and set in the epigraph to the major work of his early years as an emblem of female degeneracy and misguidance. (According to legend, notes one anthropologist, the Sibyl's face is seen in the moon.)[14] The moon is debunked even more severely in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" where her "memory" (past cultural significance) is obliterated and her character personified in a stale and sickly female decadence:

> 'The moon has lost her memory.
> A washed-out smallpox cracks her face,
> Her hand twists a paper rose,
> That smells of dust and eau de Cologne,
> She is alone
> With all the old nocturnal smells
> That cross and cross across her brain.

"Hysteria" also satirizes the charming female, contorting her flirtatious laughter into an image of a formidable sea-scape. As in "Portrait of a Lady," it is the man's sense of victimization, loss of self-possession, in a woman's company that are given expression. Here, he finds himself drawn into semi-conscious oblivion on the waves of her throaty laughter, as though he were drowned in the sea-mouth of Calypso's cave:

> As he laughed I was aware of becoming involved in her laughter and being part of it. . . . I was drawn in by short gasps, inhaled at each momentary recovery, lost finally in the dark caverns of her throat, bruised by the ripple of unseen muscles.

In both poems, Eliot uses the "realistic" stereotype of the mindless socialite to undermine romantic cliché. His moon and cave imagery prefigure the sexual-landscape imagery of The Waste Land, which Eliot opposes, as I shall argue later, to mythic ideas of femininity.

* * * *

Eliot discovered Baudelaire and the French Symbolists, as he said more than once, early in his career. In these poets, he found not only models for his poetic style but also provisions for his misogynous theme. From Laforgue, he learned the art of "playing voices against one another--the wry voice of the sufferer, the scathing or flippant voice of the commentator, the banal voice of a woman."[15] He felt an attitudinal affinity to Laforgue and Baudelaire, sharing with them a "powerful sense of evil and a passionate antagonism towards society" and, particularly, with Laforgue, in whom he appreciated "an alienation from the world and from women that accorded with his own feelings."[16] Eliot acknowledges his debt to the French poets in "To Criticize the Critic":

> I have written about Baudelaire but nothing about Jules Laforgue, to whom I owe more than any one poet in any language, or about Tristan Corbière, to whom I owe something also.[17]

In Corbière's "L'Eternel Madame" and Laforgue's "Complainte à Notre-Dame des Soirs" Eliot could certainly have found models for his satirical portraits of ladies and inspiration or reinforcement for his negative conception of a mythic female.[18] Both poems aim to shatter an ideal of femininity. Like Pater's "La Gioconda" passage, they present female nature as dual, savage and divine, and they discern the figure of the whore in the design of beatitude. Corbière's speaker haughtily ridicules the idealized notion of woman as loving Virgin, asserting its symbolic emptiness by exposing the "Eternel Féminin" as merely a "Mannequin idéal," attributing to her character animal lusts, self-damning desires, and a stupid and ferocious nature:

> Mannequin idéal, tête-de-ture du leurre,
> Éternel Féminin!
> . . . .
> Me montrer comme on fait chez vous, anges déchus.
> . . . .
>
> Damne-toi, pure idole! et ris! et chante! . . .
> . . . .
> Fille de marbre! en rut! sois folâtre! . . . et pensive
> Maîtresse, chair de moi! fais-toi vierge et lascive . . .
> Féroce, sainte, et bête, en me cherchant un coeur . . .
>
> Sois femelle de l'homme, et sers de Muse, ô femme

"L'Eternel Féminin" suggests the source of the "eternal humourist" of "Conversation Galante" and of the ferocious hypergelast of "Hysteria," the fleshly, flirtatious, mindless female of the male, the Muse of his "mad poetics." Eliot's characters, more undermining than Corbière's, reduce "L'Eternel Madame" to a hollow façade and deprive her of sexual power and iconographic charm. He makes her both more trivial and more distracting than the female of Corbière's poem. She is, in short, the "eternal enemy of the absolute."

Laforgue, too, fuels not Eliot's style but also his misogyny. The persona of Laforgue's poems is, no doubt, implicated in the development of the irony of Eliot's early work, but the irony has its object as well as its tone of voice. In "Complainte à Notre-Dame des Soirs," Laforgue's speaker, a self-defeating iconoclast, raves against an omnipotent female nature which is symbolized by the moon. He ridicules this omnipotence by first exposing its natural decadence:

> . . . La Nature, fade
> Usine de sève aux lymphatiques parfums.
> . . . .
> . . . Lune aux échos dont communient les puits!

Then he hurls a bitter diatribe against the virgin moon goddess whom he associates with Mary--"Marie," "Notre-Dame des Soirs." She is no sublime virgin, but a "coquette Marie," engaging men (as does Frazer's "cruel goddess") in sexual harvests ("vendages sexaproques"). Laforgue's persona implicates himself among those duped males, stupid enough to be charmed by this irrepressible but heartless femininity and who, ill-satisfied, moan over the hollowness of the breasts they have worshipped ("Puis s'affigent sur maint sein creux, mal abreuvés . . .).

The moon in Eliot's "Rhapsody" reflects that in Laforgue's "Notre-Dame des Soirs." It signifies a faded, feeble, coquettish, feminine nature characterized, also, by "lymphatiques parfums":

> 'Regard the moon,
> La lune ne garde aucune rancune,
> She winks a feeble eye,
> She smiles into corners.
> . . . .
> Her hand twists a paper rose,
> That smells of dust and eau de Cologne,
> . . . .
> . . . female smells in shuttered rooms . . . .

The voices singing out of "exhausted wells" and "empty cisterns" in the "faint moonlight" of the "graveyard" scene in "What the Thunder Said," may derive from Laforgue's lunar echoes in communion with "les puits." Both images suggest the barrenness of the Earth Mother and the sacrilegious character of her moon which unsettles souls in the church cemetery and inspires a haunting, hollow communion. Eliot's singing voices signify those of the living dead who are entombed in the wells and cisterns of an underworld labyrinth and who anticipate, vainly, a miraculous rebirth. They are related, ironically, to the voices of the boys' choir singing in the Grail castle at the completion of the quest: "Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!" Eliot inserts this line from Verlaine's "Parsifal" after another "moon" passage in which Mrs. Porter figures. She reflects the "coquette Marie," the mock virgin Diana, and she is the inspiration of this quest, the personification of those "empty cisterns" and "exhausted wells" which harbour the voices of lost, dead souls.

Verlaine's "Parsifal" portrays the Grail Knight as exemplary misogynist hero, the model of asceticism and transcendence to which Eliot's quester aspires in the "culmination" of "The Fire Sermon." Parsifal triumphs over seductive woman with her sweet chatter, amusing lust, devious heart and exciting bosom. He vanquishes Hell by vanquishing this alluring female, proving the sanctity of his boyish virility and the purity of his devotion to Christ:

> Parsifal a vaincu les Filles, leur gentil
> Babil et la luxure amusante--et sa pente
> Vers la Chair de garçon vierge que cela tente
> D'aimer les seins légers et ce gentil babil;
>
> Il a vaincu la Femme belle, au coeur subtil,
> Étalant ses bras frais et sa gorge excitante;
> Il a vaincu l'Enfer et rentre sous sa tente
> Avec un lourd trophée à son bras puéril,
>
> Avec la lance qui perça le Flanc suprême!
> Il a guéri le roi, le voici roi lui-même,
> Et prêtre du très saint Trésor essentiel.
>
> En robe d'or il adore, gloire et symbole,
> Le vase pur où resplendit le Sang réel,
> --Et, ô ces voix d'enfants chantant dans la coupole!

Eliot's quester may aspire to sainthood by the end of "The Fire Sermon" but, prior to that, he demonstrates his degeneracy by failing to overcome feminine bewitchery. He falls for the hyacinth girl's fatal charm and Madame Sosostris' blinding vision, both of which guide him to Hell, to the infernal circularity of material life. Eliot's anti-hero vanquishes no maiden but, like Tereus, ravishes and pursues--as the clerk, for instance, who advances upon the typist once she initiates her seductive and bewildering routine. Only the fisherman of the drafts escapes the charming female. Like Verlaine's Parsifal, he is not amused by her lusts and solemnly withdraws from the decadent pleasures of Marm Brown's joint. But his self-control is less a triumph of sanctimonious, masculine power of will than a symptom of moral paralysis. He is "horrified beyond horror, calm"; he is not controlled but catatonic, so demoralized by woman and her sensuality that he has lost all responsiveness to her sex.

Laforgue, too, writes on the subject of the Grail, though his "Complainte de Pauvre Chevalier-Errant" is an ironic portrayal of the modern quester. His knight is an anti-hero in contemporary dress, a pitiful sandwich man advertising dinners and rooms at the "Bon Chevalier-Errant." He searches vainly for women of the same romantic and anachronistic mind as himself to embody his idealized Eden or Hell which is symbolized in an imagery of "escaliers de flammes/ Labyrinthes alanguises." But none of the women he encounters cares about his quest. A "degenerate descendent" of Verlaine's triumphant quester, this pathetic Parsifal fails to find a single female profound enough to inspire either sin or saintliness and the absolute antithesis of Paradise and Hell is dissipated in the irony of Laforgue's mock heroics.

Eliot could have found in Laforgue's work a model not only for his quester but also for his hyacinth girl. In "Dimanches," there is a violet girl who signifies the universal life process and the whole natural womb of being ("tout le mortel foyer/ Tout, tout ce foyer en elle!"). She is autumnal, not vernal, though, like Eliot's hyacinth girl, she signifies death in the terrestrial life cycle. She also promises resurrection, with "des premiers lilacs" of the spring. Laforgue's self-defeating persona laments the communion of his soul with natural, mortal being, which this female ("idéal violette") symbolizes and he presents his desire for her as a death wish ("mourir ensemble"). His despair is aggravated furthermore by the memory of tragic women (one of which figures predominantly in Eliot's poem):

> . . . des Antigones, des Philomèles:
> Mon fossoyeur, Alas poor Yorick!
> Les remue à la pelle!

One untitled poem of Laforgue's, from Derniers vers, parodies Hamlet's address to Ophelia, in which he directs her to get to a nunnery. In soliloquy, Laforgue's speaker launches a bitter invective against the natural depravity of sexual love, the ugly mating games of society ("vilains jeux"), and the creaturely and routine existence of women ("Que toutes sont créature; et que tout est routine!"). He rebukes his fiancée's miserable advances, "(Langueurs, débilité, palpitations, larmes,/ Oh, cette misère de vouloir être notre femme)."

Eliot's Prufrock is "not Prince Hamlet nor was meant to be," in parody, perhaps, of Laforgue's rampaging hero. His interior monologue is addressed only to the audience of himself, since he dares to address neither the terrifyingly bare-armed female "one" or the other "women" who "come and go" in the "room." Prufrock casts himself clearly as a victim of female sensuality, identifying less with Hamlet than with John the Baptist, whose head is "brought in upon a platter" as a consequence of the unveiling dance of Salomé. The anti-heroic note of "Prufrock" carries over into The Waste Land, where Eliot's "personage" falls for "vilains jeux" (the game of chess and other foul play between the sexes) and withdraws in stricken silence in the face of female hysterics. The male character of the "Hyacinths" scene is, perhaps, more like Ophelia than Hamlet, an emasculated victim of the woman's water and flowers.

* * * *

Eliot said that he owed more to Laforgue than to "any one poet in any language," but The Waste Land is profoundly Baudelairean. At least one critic has noted the echoes of Baudelaire and of "Un Voyage à Cythère" in Eliot's poem.[19] "Let us accept," writes Nicole Ward, in her essay, "'Fourmillante Cité': Baudelaire and The Waste Land,"

> that Tiresias' vision of 'love' both reveals and 'objectifies' a state of emotional disturbance. Paralysis of feelings and energies, blasé coldness and disgust in the face of love, all contributed to Baudelaire's waste land, the land of Spleen, of Ennui, from which, at the end of Les Fleurs du Mal, there seems to be no escape but death. The poem which best compares with Tiresias' vision is perhaps 'Un Voyage à Cythère.' . . .[20]

"Un Voyage à Cythère" is a landscape of love, or the love-making experience cast in a metaphorical voyage to Venus' rocky isle in the Cyclades and presented from a man's perspective. A haunting dissonance, much like that in The Waste Land, may be heard in the opening lines of this poem. Here, as in the "Hyacinths" scene, there is a gloomy sense of fatalism mixed with high romantic expectation. Baudelaire's naïve lover sets out across the sea, enchanted by songs of love, only to arrive at a loveless waste land, Venus' "île triste et noire" just as Eliot's lover-"personage" recalls the charming hyacinth girl, Isolde's promising sea-voyage, and the sailor's love song, before they dissolve in the loveless vista of the barren and empty sea. Here are the first five verses of "Cythère":

Mon coeur, comme un oiseau, voltigeait tout joyeux
Et planait librement à l'entour des cordages;
Le navire roulait sous un ciel sans nuages,
Comme un ange enivré d'un soleil radieux.

Quelle est cette île triste et noire?--C'est Cythère,
Nous dit-on, un pays fameux dans les chansons,
Eldorado banal de tous les vieux garçons.
Regardez, après tout, c'est une pauvre terre.

--Ile des doux secrets et des fêtes du coeur!
De l'antique Vénus le superbe fantome
Au-dessus de tes mers plane comme un arome,
Et charge les esprits d'amour et de langueur.

Belle île aux myrtes verts, pleine de fleurs écloses,
Vénérée à jamais par toute nation,
Où les soupirs des coeurs en adoration
Roulent comme l'encens sur un jardin de roses

Ou le roucoulement éternel d'un ramier!
--Cythère n'était plus qu'un terrain des plus maigres,
Un désert rocailleux troublé par des cris aigres.
J'entrevoyais pourtant un objet singulier!

As Baudelaire's lover journeys closer to the shore, closer, that is, to that blinding moment in the climax of love, it is not a sublime vision of woman he beholds, "la jeune prêtesse, amoureuses des fleurs," but a hideously mutilated male corpse. "Cythère" presents an image of repugnant, sinful, sexual love in the emasculated, rotting body of a hanged man, recalling "Villon's hanged men, grotesquely crucified to Venus"[21] and Frazer's hanged man, sacrificed to Cybele.[22]

The poem continues:

Ce n'était pas un temple aux ombres bocagères,
Où la jeune prêtresse, amoureuse des fleurs,
Allait, le corps brûlé de secrètes chaleurs,
Entre-bâillant sa robe aux brises passagères;

Mais voilà qu'en rasant la côte d'assez près
Pour troubler les oiseaux avec nos voiles blanches,
Nous vîmes que c'était un gibet à trois branches,
Du ciel se détachant en noir, comme un cyprès.

De féroces oiseaux perchés sur leur pâture
Détruisaient avec rage un pendu déjà mur,
Chacun plantant, comme un outil, son bec impur
Dans tous les coins saignants de cette pourriture;

Les yeux étaient deux trous, et du ventre effondré
Les intestins pesants lui coulaient sur les cuisses,
Et ses bourreaux, gorgés de hideuses délices,
L'avaient à coups de bec absolument châtré.

. . . .

Dans ton île, ô Vénus! je n'ai trouvé debout
Qu'un gibet symbolique où pendait mon image . . .
--Ah! Seigneur! donnez-moi la force et le courage
De contempler mon coeur et mon corps sans dégoût!

Eliot's "Hanged Man" finds its source in Frazer's "Hanged God" while his "man with three staves" may find its source in Baudelaire's "gibet à trois branches." The "Hanged Man" represents avatars of the suffering flesh while the "man with three staves" may, like the "gibet," symbolize man and his fleshly corruption. What the man sees in his climactic moment in the garden may be found in "Cythère," a horrifying revelation of his own crucifixion, barren of redeeming love. He submits to the hyacinth girl, "la jeune prêtesse, amoureuses des fleurs," the priestess of Aphrodite, Goddess of Desire or the "Lady of the Rocks," who rose from the ocean of chaos and "stept ashore" (29) onto the rocky isle of Cythera. Baudelaire represents Aphrodite as did the later Hellenes, that is, as Androphonos or "man slayer," the Magna Mater of "infâmes cultes."[23] The fisherman in the drafts is "horrified" by ancient female apparitions which appear in the "fore cross trees," singing a charming song, as though he, too, has a vision of Cythère, ("fameux dans les chansons" . . . "De Pantique Vénus le superbe fantôme" . . . "charge les esprits d'amour et de langeur"). These are not sublime spirits but fatal relatives of the sirens and the fates and next of kin to a crucifying Venus.

"Cythère's" opening lines are also reflected in the beginning of "Sweeney Erect":

> Paint me a cavernous waste shore
>   Cast in the unstilled Cyclades,
> Paint me the bold anfractuous rocks
>   Faced by the snarled and yelping seas.

"Sweeney Erect" portrays the brutality and beastliness of sexual "love," though primarily in the character of Sweeney rather than in a landscape metaphor. Sweeney's mythic equivalent is the one-eyed, cave-man, ogre, "Polypheme," and, in The Waste Land, he is connected to Actaeon, who was mutilated and destroyed by his own hunting dogs for spying on virgin Diana in her bath. He is natural man with primitive desires in modern caricature, a "degenerate descendent" of these mythic figures (consorting with broad-footed Doris and the prostitute, Mrs. Porter) and no noble savage. His desert isle of "love" is surrounded by ferocious seas, the maternal ocean of chaos from which Aphrodite emerged and the barren womb to which her lover, Adonis, is cruelly reclaimed. In short, this image of love, like "Cythère," is devoid of any higher, redeeming sense; the sexual is seen in isolation from the spiritual and cast in a degrading and fatalistic light.

Sweeney reappears "Among the Nightingales" where he suffers a humiliation akin to Agamemnon's dishonorable murder and a ritual mutilation of the sort described by Frazer, at the hands of sleezy, sinister, savage females. These nightingales are, perhaps, "degenerate descendents" of priestesses of Aphrodites' "infâmes cultes" (or of the Amazons who, like Clytemnestra, bear a mortal grudge against man: they arise from the jungle estuary of the South American "River Plate"). The "Lady of the Rocks" is not among them, but there is the "lady of the cape" (or the lady of "shrunken seas") who is as deadly as the "murderous" nightingale-raven, Rabinovitch. Eliot, like Baudelaire, figures vice and corruption in images of beastly females ("[d]e féroces oiseaux," "[d]es corbeaux lancinants"). These characters are "thought to be in league," not as sisters from the "Convent of the Sacred Heart" but as members of the underground.[24] They show no "heart of light," no grace, no mercy, but only a primitive and decadent heart of darkness and they engage in ritual activity including a symbolic meal of "oranges/ Bananas figs and hot house grapes" and a ceremonious castration--"Rachel née Rabinovitch/ Tears at the grapes with murderous paws"--which foreshadows the climactic and shady event of Sweeney's seduction/murder/sacrifice. The drama takes place under the sign of "Gloomy Orion," recalling Frazer's description of the ritual sacrifice of South Sea Islanders who hanged (and severely mutilated) a man with the rise of this constellation each December.

Baudelaire's persona-lover expresses horror and disgust at the desecration of his body sacrificed to a corrupting Venus and, at the same time, indicates his righteous suffering, "en expiation de tes infâmes cultes/ Et des péchés." He identifies with this hanged man--"Dans ton île, ô Vénus! je n'ai trouvé debout/ Qu'un gibet symbolique où pendait mon image . . ."--and keeps this horror dear to his memory ("pauvre diable au souvenir si cher") as a symbol of his damnation and as negative or ironic inspiration to seek a redemptive path. Ultimately, he appeals to God, "Ah! Seigneur! donnez-moi la force et le courage/ De contempler mon coeur et mon corps sans dégoût!"

The "personage" of The Waste Land witnesses the corruption of Venus specifically in the slatternly, beastly character of Fresca, who is ironically named "Venus Anadyomene" after Praxitele's modest idol, and generally in those of the female characters in the poem who appear to be engaged in uninspiring and debasing sex. Like Baudelaire's persona, he also appeals to a god, merging with the "I" who solemnly invokes and interprets the guiding wisdom of the thunder.

The landscape imagery of "What the Thunder Said" comprises both a sexual metaphor and a metaphor of the quest, coupling, that is, the symbolism (or the symbolic technique) of "Un Voyage à Cythère" with a myth of initiation. The winding walk through the rocky desert reflects the "desert" of Vénus' rocky isle and the labyrinthine ritual, the journey through a "purgatorial wilderness." The images of corruption (or of the "Descent into Hell") are female, not male; there is no emasculated corpse but instead a "decayed hole" and a "dead mountain mouth with carious teeth that could not spit," images of a vile Earth Mother or barren fertility goddess.

Several years after the publication of The Waste Land, Eliot wrote an essay on Baudelaire in which he commends the French poet's symbolism of Sin and Evil and justifies the "constant vituperations of the female." He conjectures that Baudelaire's underlying poetic purpose was to adjust the "natural to the spiritual" and, ultimately, to arrive at a figure of beatitude, though he is often inconsistent or clumsy in this quest. (Compared to Dante, Eliot notes, "Baudelaire is a bungler.") "His divine love," claims Eliot, is

> vague and uncertain: hence his insistence upon the evil of [human] love, hence his constant vituperations of the female. In this there is no need to pry for psychopathological causes, which would be irrelevant at best; for his attitude towards women is consistent with the point of view he had reached. Had he been a woman he would, no doubt, have held the same views about men. He has arrived at the perception that a woman must be to some extent a symbol. . . .[25]

Eliot's statement recalls Lyndall Gordon's observation about female stereotypes and "the traditional way of coping with women in literature and theology" which seeks to "fix her image" in symbols of sin or saintliness, "never allowing her full humanity." "Eliot," she adds, "seems to have regarded a seductive woman not as a human being but as a man's ordeal, a figure of sin with whom the man had to heroically consort."[26]

The poet's comment in his 1930 Baudelaire essay is no less true of his own early work than it is of the Frenchman's. The female figure of The Waste Land is not necessarily a symbol of sin and evil, but she is certainly a symbol of modern decadence and corruption, and of a modern underworld mythically connected to the Sibyl's labyrinth, Persephone's Hades, and Francesca's Hell. Eliot does not present a figure of beatitude in The Waste Land but, by creating a feminine symbol of depravity, he demonstrates the need, as he sees it, for a redeeming vision of woman.

Eliot concentrates his misogyny in the figure of Fresca who embodies not only sexual but also cultural decadence. She may derive from Baudelaire's Vénus, a ridiculous, bestial, carnal femininity who grotesquely corrupts the honorable (moral and aesthetic) intentions of man, but she derives, more precisely, from Rimbaud's "Vénus Anadyomène," a satiric onslaught on Praxitele's sublime female. (Ezra Pound translated and published Rimbaud's poem in the Little Review for February 1918.) Rimbaud's mutilation of the mythic Venus is no less grotesque nor any less ridiculous than Baudelaire's. This Venus is displayed in all of her humiliating, animal imperfection:

> Comme d'un cercueil vert en fer blanc, une tête
> De femme à cheveux bruns fortement pommadés
> D'une vieille baignoire émerge, lente et bête,
> Avec des déficits assez mal ravaudés;
>
> Puis le col gras et gris, les larges omoplates
> Qui saillent; le dos court qui rentre et qui ressort;
> Puis les rondeurs des reins semblent prendre l'essor;
> La graisse sous la peau paraît en feuilles plates;
>
> L'échine est un peu rouge; et le tout sent un goût
> Horrible étrangement; on remarque surtout
> Des singularités qu'il faut voir à la loupe . . . .[27]

Baudelaire's description of woman in La Peintre de la vie moderne may have contributed to Eliot's caricature of Fresca. In "La Femme" Baudelaire laments the general and artistic idealization of the female:

> L'être qui est, pour la plupart des hommes, la source des plus vives, et même, disons-le à la honte des voluptés philosophiques, des plus durables jouissances; l'être vers qui ou au profit de qui tendent tous leurs efforts; cet être terrible et incommunicable comme Dieu (avec cette différence que l'infini ne se communique pas parce qu'il aveuglerait et écraserait le fini, tandis que l'être dont nous parlons n'est peut-être incompréhensible que parce qu'il n'a rien à communiquer). . . . la femme, en un mot, n'est pas seulement pour l'artiste en général . . . la femelle de l'homme. C'est plutôt une divinité, un astre, qui préside à toutes les conceptions du cerveau mâle; c'est un miroitement de toutes les grâces de la nature condensées dans un seul être. . . . C'est une espèce d'idole, stupide peut-être, mais éblouissante, enchanteresse, qui tient les destinées et les volontés suspendues à ses regards.[28]

Fresca is more than just the female of the male ("la femelle de l'homme"); she is an idol admired by "thousands" and a symbol of modern art. She knows "the wealth and fashion of the land" and the "fame and beauty of the stage." Eliot mocks the mentality of the times, which worships such a figure despite her stupidity ("C'est une espèce d'idole, stupide peut-être, mais éblouissante, enchanteresse, . . ."): ". . . the wonder of our little age;/ She gave the turf her intellectual patronage" (29). She is a "goddess or a star" ("une divinité, un astre"), a "degenerate descendent," that is, of Venus, the celestial body, or "Aeneas' mother," appearing here, "in another time and place." More compelling than "Minerva in a crowd of boxing peers," Fresca "rules" an "even more distinguished sphere," which, apparently, is the world of Hollywood, for Fresca is a movie-"star," enrapturing the "sweating rabble in the cinema." Aeneas also appears on the scene, but not, like his "mother," Venus, in corrupted, contemporary form. He is displaced, historically, and disoriented among the crowded, darkened aisles of the theatre (a local and temporal image of the archetypal labyrinth). When the "goddess" appears before him, on stage or screen, he does not recognize her face--the profile of a modern female celebrity. It is not her image he had in mind in his mythic quest for rebirth:

> To Aeneas, in an unfamiliar place
> Appeared his mother, with an altered face,
> He knew the goddess by her celestial pace. (29)

In "Les Femmes et les filles," Baudelaire compares the modern woman of fashion with the courtesan: "Des femmes qui ont exagéré la mode jusqu'à en altérer la grâce et en détruire l'intention, balayent fastueusement les parquets avec la queue de leur robes . . . ," and the courtesan with the artist and poet:

> Les considérations relative à la courtisane peuvent, jusqu'à un certain point, s'appliquer à la comédienne; car, elle aussi, elle est une créature d'apparat, un objet de plaisir public. . . . Si par un côté la comédienne touche à la courtisane, par l'autre elle confine au poëte.[29]

Fresca is a screen and stage actress, as well as an amateur poet, a coquettish idôle and dilettante. Her professionally made-up, "altered face" and movie star's "celestial pace" reflect the affected "grâce" of Baudelaire's "comedienne-courtisane." Fresca derives partly from D. G. Rossetti's sleepy prostitute, "more sinned against than sinning, . . ./ The lazy laughing Jenny of the bard," and partly from Baudelaire's bohemian-whore:

> Elle représent bien la sauvagerie dans la civilization. Elle a sa beauté qui lui vient du Mal, toujours denuée de spiritualité, mais quelquefois teintée d'une fatigue qui joue la mélancolie. Elle porte le . . . même distraction indolente. . . . Type de bohème errant sur les confins d'une société régulière, la trivialité de sa vie. . . .[30]

Fresca represents only a mild form of "sauvagerie dans la civilization," being but a "domestic puss puss cat," but she recalls another prima donna, Grishkin, "The sleek Brazilian jaguar/ . . . in a drawing room." She is also a "type bohème errant"), "a strolling slattern in a tawdry gown," devoid of intellect or spirituality (though full of "mother wit," a "natural trull"), living a life of luxurious ease and excessive triviality which she exposes in a letter of her own composition:

> "I went last night--more out of dull despair--
> To Lady Kleinwurm's party--who was there?
> Oh, Lady Kleinwurm's monde--no one that mattered--
> Somebody sang, and Lady Kleinwurm chattered.
> What are you reading? anything that's new?
> I have a clever book by Giraudoux.
> Clever, I think, is all. I've much to say--
> But cannot say it--that is just my way--
> When shall we meet--tell me all your manoeuvres;
> And all about yourself and your new lovers--
> And when to Paris? I must make an end,
> My dear, believe me, your devoted
> friend." (23)

Fresca is "incommunicable," since, as Baudelaire says of women in general, she has nothing to communicate.

Fresca is one of Baudelaire's "Narcisses de l'imbecillité," sinking "in revery" between "conscious sheets," blinking and yawning and gaping, "aroused from dreams of loves and pleasant rapes." Her creative urge to write poetry generates less from what Eliot identifies as Baudelairean "sublimation of passion" than from Freudian "sublimation," the frustration of sleeping alone--

When restless nights distract her brain from sleep
She may as well write poetry, as count sheep.
And on those nights when Fresca lies alone,
She scribbles verse of such a gloomy tone
That cautious critics say, her style is quite her own. (27)

Eliot need not have drawn this image of the female poet specifically from Baudelaire, for the failed female artist is a literary stereotype in the misogynous tradition. Eighteenth-century satirical literature commonly presents the female writer as a sexual monster engaged in art (alas, in vain) to sublimate her fleshly desires:

> . . . female writers are maligned as failures in eighteenth-century satire precisely because they cannot transcend their female bodily limitations: they cannot conceive of themselves in any but reproductive terms. Poor Phoebe Clinket, for instance, is both a caricature . . . and a prototype of the female dunce who proves that literary creativity in women is merely the result of sexual frustration.[31]

Eliot's caricature of Fresca blends Augustan and Baudelairean misogyny. Pope's social satire is imitated here, and so, too, is Swift's scatalogical verse:

Leaving the bubbling beverage to cool,
Fresca slips softly to the needful stool,
Where the pathetic tale of Richardson
Eases her labour till the deed is done. (23)

Eliot shares with Swift a "dread of physicality" as it is embodied in the "degenerate woman," and, like Swift, he is scornful of woman's apparent incapacity to transcend the baseness of her flesh through writing--or reading. In The Madwoman in the Attic, The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar provide a discussion of Swift's misogyny which elucidates the tradition out of which Eliot formulates his attack on the female artist. "It is significant," they write,

> that Jonathan Swift's disgust with the monstrous females who populate so many of his verses seems to have been caused specifically by the inexorable failure of female art. Like disgusted Gulliver, who returns to England only to prefer the stable to the parlor, his horses to his wife, Swift projects his horror of time, his dread of physicality, on to another stinking creature--the degenerate woman. Probably the most famous instance of this projection occurs in his so-called dirty poems. In these works, we peer behind the facade of the angel woman to discover that, say, the idealized "Caelia, Caelia, Caelia, shits!" We discover that the seemingly unblemished Chloe must "either void or burst," and that the female "inner space" of the "Queen of Love" is like a foul chamber pot. Though some critics have suggested that the misogyny implied by Swift's characterizations of these women is merely ironic, what emerges from his most furious poems in this vein is a horror of female flesh and a revulsion at the inability--the powerlessness--of female arts to redeem or to transform the flesh. Thus for Swift female sexuality is consistently equated with degeneration, disease, and death, while female arts are trivial attempts to forestall an inevitable end.[32]

Fresca's bedchamber scene is written in imitation of The Rape of the Lock (127n.), but, according to one critic, it departs from Pope's innocuous criticism of Belinda in its blatant misogyny. "Eliot," writes Gareth Reeves in "The Obstetrics of The Waste Land,"

> fails to capture Pope's attitude toward his subject. Pope shows Belinda making her toilet, Eliot shows his heroine, Fresca, doing it; such a reversal hints . . . that Eliot's attitude toward Fresca is one of fascinated horror. Pope too is fascinated by his heroine, but his fascination comes from admiration, not from horror. Pope does not condemn Belinda, but rather satirizes contemporary social customs. . . .[33]

Reeves attributes Eliot's derisive portrait of Fresca to "a fearful horror of female sexuality," and he draws attention to the various forms of decadence which the poet has contemptuously caricatured in her figure. "So in his portrait of Fresca," Reeves observes, "Eliot attempts a penetrating examination of English society, in which sexual, cultural, intellectual and artistic tendencies are scrutinized as different symbols of a general malaise."[34] This Belinda-Belladonna inherits not only the repulsive physical and cosmetic character of eighteenth-century satire, but also the insipid (as Eliot sees it) literary tradition of the late nineteenth century. She is a grotesque Venus (Rimbaud's fleshly monster made all the more grotesque by her poetic pretensions) who, with her mock "Muses nine," aspires to the literary stage on an impulse generated by the "wishy washy" late Victorians. "Fresca was born upon a soapy sea/ Of Symonds-Walter Pater-Vernon Lee" (27).

In his essay "Arnold and Pater," Eliot denounces the literary tradition which Fresca represents. He outlines a "degradation" of the European mind as it is manifested in Victorian critical thinking and particularly as it is manifested in Pater's aestheticism and the so-called Decadent movement. Eliot condemns this aestheticism (whose origins can be traced to Arnold's "humanism") for corrupting Gautier's doctrine of _l'art pour l'art_ by confusing art with life and for subsuming morality and religion under art's jurisdiction. He bitterly attacks Pater's _Marius_, which contains a literary formulation of the doctrine of "intellectual Epicureanism," calling it "incoherent," a "hodge podge of learning," and commending it only for its historical value, that is, for displaying the "dissolution of thought in that age."[35] This attack on Pater and Victorian aestheticism may be seen in Eliot's satirical portrait of Fresca. She digests an exotic assortment of European literature in a "hodge podge of learning" which is eventually converted to poetry in a "style . . . quite her own":

> The Scandinavians bemused her wits,
> The Russians thrilled her to hysteric fits.
> From such chaotic misch-masch potpourri
> What are we to expect but poetry? (27)

Pater's "intellectual Epicureanism" is mocked by Fresca's vulgar hedonism, and her pragmatic reading of Richardson "to ease her labour" demonstrates a perverse confusion of life and art.

Despite her dandyism, Fresca is abominably natural. Crude impulses and desires dominate her intellectual life, and her artful appearance merely disguises a more down-to-earth character: "Odours confected by the artful French,/ Disguise the good old hearty female stench." Like all women in The Waste Land, Fresca possesses an animal humanity but is deprived of moral reasoning and spiritual intuition just as she is deprived of the capacity to make aesthetic judgements. (She does not melt into the "personage" who interprets the thunder's categorical imperatives, though she is, most certainly, among the barbarian hordes [the "sweating rabble"] springing from a collapsing, modern European civilization.)

Baudelaire outlines this essential femininity in a passage from his Journaux Intimes (with which Eliot was intimately familiar by 1930--and very likely earlier--when he wrote an introduction to Christopher Isherwood's translation of them:

> La femme est le contraire du dandy.
> Donc elle doit faire horreur.
> La femme a faim et elle veut manger. Soif, et elle veut boire.
> Elle est en rut et elle veut être foutue.
> Le beau mérite!

> La femme est naturelle, c'est-à-dire abominable. Aussi est-elle toujours vulgaire, c'est-à-dire le contraire du dandy.[36]

The Symbolists display a particular consistency in the signification of "La Femme." Corbière's "L'Eternel Féminin," echoes Baudelaire with his "femelle de l'homme" and his "femme," "féroce" and "en rut." The female figure dominating The Waste Land is the inviolable nightingale whose lewd natural call resounds throughout the spiritual desert. Aristophane's courtesan is not the only nightingale. There are also the harlot queens, the indifferent typist, the promiscuous Thames-daughters, and the adulterous fish-wife of the public house while, in the drafts, Fresca leads the procession of lowly Magdalenes, the girls from Myrtle's place and Marm Brown's joint. It is female sensuality that compels Tereus and men like him (the man in the "Hyacinths" scene, the clerk, Leicester)--the "whole world"--to pursue an "unmoral" nature, in violation of man's higher calling, whether that is the noble purpose of kings or the spiritual expectations of the "Son of man."

Before Freud established the notion of libido and the dynamics of the psyche, explaining the natural opposition between sexual instincts that govern the unconscious and acquired patterns of social conscience, Baudelaire had already outlined the essential distinction between "la nature" and "la vertu," between brute desire and the design of reason (or spirit) which is artificial (or supernatural) and which allows man to govern himself. Vice and crime, he conjectured, generate in the womb, while virtue derives from the teachings of gods and prophets:

> C'est cette infaillable nature qui a créé le parricide et l'anthropophagie, et mille autres abominations que la pudeur et la délicatesse nous empêchent de nommer. . . . La nature (qui n'est pas autre chose que la voix de notre intérêt) nous

> commande de les assommer. . . . Le crime, dont l'animal humain a puisé le goût dans le ventre de sa mère, est originellement naturel. La vertu, au contraire, est artificielle, surnaturelle, puisqu'il a fallu, dans tous les temps et chez toutes les nations, des dieux et des prophètes pour l'enseigner à l'humanité animalisée, et que l'homme, seul, eût été impuissant à la découvrir.[37]

The warnings or injunctions of gods and prophets oppose the inviolable voice of nature in The Waste Land and the message of asceticism is, according to Eliot, the "culmination" of that part of the poem in which a female presence is dominant. Asceticism, of course, is the supreme artifice. (In Baudelaire, it is the dandy, "le contraire" of woman who is capable of asceticism.)

Eliot's female figure, a symbol of vice, corruption, and mindless animality, is also a symbol of "ennui." Fresca's world, for all its glamour, is despairingly dull; the typist is imprisoned in mechanical routine; and Marie reads every night and goes south for the winter with little enthusiasm. "Ennui" was the product of Baudelaire's time, a period, according to Eliot, of "humanitarianism and revolutions which improved nothing, an age of progressive degradation.[38] A poetry of evil and horror, and particularly human corruption signified by a female figure, is designed, he explains, to bring relief to a man desperately wanting a "significance to living" amidst the tumult and tedium of progress. Eliot, in turn, seeks relief from "the ennui of modern life." (Ironically, he seeks relief from an age of progress in which "electoral reform" and "sex reform" has brought greatest relief for women, and triumph for those feminists struggling for enfranchisement, education and employment.) Like Baudelaire (who was, Eliot writes, "man enough to be damned"), he appears to find relief in the symbol of frightening degeneracy which he creates out of female figures, that is to say, "Une oasis d'horreur dans un désert d'ennui!"[39] The women in The Waste Land melt into a mythic figure of such monstrous natural depravity as to frighten "beyond fear," horrify "past horror."

The female figure of The Waste Land descends from a wide literary context which ranges from Homer to Conrad and which draws most heavily on the decadent-symbolist tradition of the nineteenth century and particularly from such figures as Corbière's "L'Eternel Féminin," Laforgue's "Notre Dame des Soirs," Pater's "Lady Lisa" and Swinburne's barren Earth Mother. On the bookshelves of Aubrey Beardsley's "Salomé" appear the books containing the images of those archetypal femmes fatales worshipped by the late Victorians.[40] Among them are Apuleuis' Golden Ass, Baudelaire's Fleurs du mal and Zola's Nana. Both Apuleuis' "triple goddess" and Baudelaire's "Cythère" contribute to the female figure in The Waste Land, and Zola's Nana may have provided Eliot with ideas for a misogynous symbol.

Zola's Nana is composed in the naturalist tradition, emphasizing and expanding some of the notions of female natural degeneracy which Baudelaire presents in his poetry and prose. The character of Zola's heroine not only reflects the "essential" female, promiscuous and destructive, but also the stupidity, depravity and wastefulness of an entire nation, the decadent Deuxième Empire. Examination of a preliminary sketch of Nana reveals analogies with the female figure in The Waste Land and particularly to Fresca, which indicates how deeply Eliot is entrenched in this misogynous tradition:

> Her character: good natured above all else. Follows her nature. . . . Bird-brain. . . . with the craziest whims. . . . At first very slovenly, vulgar; then plays the lady and watches herself closely.--With that, ends up regarding man as a material to exploit, becoming a force of Nature, a ferment of destruction, but without meaning to, simply by means of her sex and her strong female odour, destroying everything she approaches, and turning society sour. . . . The cunt in all its power; the cunt on an altar, with all the men offering up sacrifices to it. The book has to be the poem of the cunt, and the moral will lie in the cunt turning everything sour. As early as Chapter One I show the whole audience captivated and worshipping. . . . Nana eats up gold. . . . the most extravagant taster, the most frightful waste. She instinctively makes a rush for pleasures. . . . And leaves nothing but ashes. In short, a real whore. Don't make her witty, which would be a mistake; she is nothing but flesh. . . .[41]

Fresca is "good natured" (she writes a cheery letter, if blank and affectatious), bird-brained (like the chattery pub lady and the twittering nightingales), vulgar and narcissistic (her instinct for pleasure is clearly dominant); she has no wit but "mother wit" and she is, particularly, fleshy, as a "natural trull" with her "hearty female stench." She is self-indulgent and slatternly, the possessor of "unreal emotion and real appetite." She is, in short, "a real whore."

Zola's all-encompassing, indomitable "Nana" derives from a deity of antiquity. According to Frazer, Cybele was also known as Nana, the "fatal mother" (to use Swinburne's phrase) of Attis, her consort/son.[42] "Nana" is a "degenerate descendent" of the fertility goddess and of her prophetess, Sibyl, and, like Laforgue's "Nôtre Dame des Soirs," she has become too big for her altars in "La Deuxième Empire." Zola clarifies his intention to write a novel about "the cunt turning everything sour." And while The Waste Land cannot be reduced to a "poem of the cunt," part of the moral significance of this poem is the pollution, sterility and destructiveness of female sexual "love." Grotesque images of female sexual anatomy are not confined to the cunt ("Red sails/ Wide") but feature also the vagina ("dull canal," "decayed hole," "dead . . . mouth") and womb ("exhausted wells," "empty cisterns," the "deadland," and the labyrinthine, "unreal city"). (It is this arid and gloomy landscape imagery that most clearly connects *The Waste Land* to Baudelaire's "Cythère"--"cette île triste et noire.")

Fresca, like Nana, captivates a whole audience with her sex appeal, enrapturing "thousands," bewitching "the sweating rabble," as a glittery idol of the cinema screen, a Hollywood sex-symbol. She too descends from a fertility goddess, Venus or Aphrodite, who inspired the carnivals of antiquity. But the idolatry of Fresca in modern times signifies "the futility and anarchy that is contemporary history." She is a degenerate "goddess" or "star," a guiding light in cultural decadence.

The closing scene of *Nana* displays the heroine in culminating state of fleshly decay. Zola exceeds even the Symbolists in disfiguring the romantic ideal, the sublime Venus:

> . . . Nana restait seule, la face en l'air, dans la clarté de la bougie. C'était un charnier, un tas d'humeur et de sang, une pelletée de chair corrompue, jetée là, sur un coussin. Les pustules avaient envahi la figure entière, un bouton touchant l'autre; et, flétries, affaissées, d'un aspect grisâtre de boue, elles semblaient déjà une moisissure de la terre, sur cette bouillie informe, où l'on ne retrovrait plus les traits. Un oeil, celui de gauche, avait complètement sombré dans le bouillonnement de la purulence; l'autre, à demi ouvert, s'enfonçait, comme un trou noir et gâté. Le nez suppurait encore. Toute une croûte rougeâtre partait d'une joue envahissait la bouche, qu'elle tirait dans un rire abominable. Et, sur ce masque horrible et grotesque du néant, les cheveux, les beaux cheveux gardant leur flambée de soleil, coulaient en un ruissellement d'or. Vénus se décomposait. Il semblait que le virus pris par elle dans les ruisseaux, sur les charognes tolérées, ce ferment dont elle avait empoisonné un peuple, venait de lui remonter au visage et l'avait pourri.

That chilling and repulsive description made its way into English literature long before Eliot constructed the composite misogyny of *The Waste Land*: it is the model for George Moore's description of his dying heroine in *The Mummer's Wife*. Fresca, too, belongs in this line of corrupted Venuses. She is Venus, "with an altered face" and, though it is not a decomposing face, *per se*, it appears to be heavily made up for her profession, which oscillates between acting and whoring, poetry and prostitution. She is clearly depraved, "dunged by every dog in town." And she "melts into" the "withered stumps" and staring forms which comprise the atrophied, universal face of femininity in *The Waste Land* (with its "decayed hole," "un trou noir et gâté"). Nana's hair is left unscathed, still golden and glowing, as if to indicate the persistence of nature's appeal in spite of the mutilation of the being in which it is embodied. The mutilated Philomela still appealed to Tereu and "the world still pursues" the "polluted" female who wears the (death) mask of the nightingale.

Venus decomposes, exposing the contagion infecting society which had been concealed behind an "unreal" romantic idea of femininity. A whole audience, a "whole world" falls for the face until the character of their affection is unmasked. As a symbol of ferment and destruction, Zola's Nana is no more disfiguring but far more encompassing than Baudelaire's "Vénus." She represents the dissolution of an entire culture and, so, she is analogous to Eliot's Sibyl, that ever-decomposing, archetypal female, who embodies an "illimitable," degenerative nature and who appears to be the leading figure in any age of decadence. This Sibyl is the "culmination" of misogynous images, of the "constant vituperations of the female" found in the literary traditions of the nineteenth century which Eliot had absorbed.

CHAPTER IV

ANTITHESIS: "THE ETERNAL ENEMY OF THE ABSOLUTE"

The female figure of The Waste Land represents the "turning world," physical, mutable, corruptible and essentially "unmoral." She is the antithesis of the Spirit embodied in the Old Testament "Son of man" and of the "higher love" of Christ-Adonis, the "Son of man" of the Mysteries. She signifies the seduction, the sorcery, the charm that lures and binds the masculine spirit to the wheel of natural or mechanized life. The stalemate between the sexes in The Waste Land is, it seems, a symptom of their essential incompatibility, as well as their depravity: her primitive nature and his tormented soul seek relief and/or fulfilment of a different kind. The man is, inevitably, dehumanized, disheartened, or spiritually emasculated in his intercourse with woman. She only aggravates and cannot regenerate his demoralized "sense," and he, in turn, cannot inspire or elevate her "unmoral" character. In the vicious circle of sexual antagonism, she, "the eternal enemy of the absolute," is left barren and wasted. Orthodox theology traditionally represents mankind's degeneracy in a female figure (while, contrarily, the mystery tradition represents the sublimation of nature, "Genesis," in the figure of a goddess). Ecclesiastes figures woman as the supreme embodiment of vanity and vexation; she opposes God, attracts sinners and brings the waste land upon mankind. Eve brings suffering and death to this world after initiating the fall from Paradise. The New Testament Revelation discloses the "whore of Babylon" to be the ruination of cities on earth.

In Eloit's Waste Land, it is woman who initiates the decline of man: her degenerate character is not only a symptom of modern decadence but also a cause. It is her incorrigible, "unmoral" nature, weakening but nevertheless "illimitable," that misguides and impairs the questing spirit.

The various male characters of the poem undergo a ritual initiation into the "lesser" mysteries of the female, and it appears that "after the event" he is more demoralized than regenerated. Following the initiation in the garden, or the delivery of Madame Sosostris' oracle, or the entrance into the queen's labyrinth-laquearia, or the "meander" down the Thames, or the typist's maze ritual, the Sibyl, in her various guises, leads the quester, blind and speechless, on a "Descent into Hell," into the "lamentable silence" of the modern underworld. There, she leaves him groping in the dark, "troubled" and "confused." He merges with the secular crowd of lost souls in the Baudelairean womb of the "Unreal city" where crime and vice are bred. Eliot's female figure embodies earthly corruption, and she rules a contemporary Babylon (Fresca "rules . . . millions"). In this waste land, the "Son of man" is actually a disenchanted son of woman dominated by savage femme fatales and "lowly . . . Magdalene[s]." Entrapped in her hellish labyrinth, he walks "among the lowest of the dead" and gazes upon the ruins of his age.

Eliot subscribes to a theological as well as to a literary tradition which attacks and disfigures the image of sensual woman. The early Church Fathers anathematized the "cult of the Magna Mater" and declared heretical those mystic sects which worshipped a goddess. The prophets of the Old Testament, the saints of Eastern and Western asceticism (St. Augustine and the Buddha) and the Apostle John condemn carnal woman and her "fertility cult." With the same prophetic tone of denunciation and admonishment, Eliot categorizes and rejects woman as a vile and lowly animal, and treats her as a symbol of decadence and damnation.

"The Wheel" associated with the female figure of the poem is not only the "Wheel of Fortune" (the tenth enigma of the Tarot pack), but also the wheel of earthly cycles, the eternal world of becoming, of life and death, growth and decay, labor and war, all those fruitless and futile processes vexatious to the spirit. Ecclesiastes denounces the terrestrial routine:

> Vanity of vanities . . . vanity of vanities; all is vanity.
> What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?
> One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh:
> but the earth abideth forever. . . .
> All of the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full;
> unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again. . . .
> I have seen all the works that are done under the son; and
> behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit.[1]

Accordingly, woman is the quintessence of "vanity and vexation": she is the human embodiment of nature, the principal source of distraction to the God-fearing man. When man loves woman to the neglect of his God, he incurs divine wrath, bringing upon him and his world absolute destruction, which is symbolized by a "broken wheel" at an empty cistern in the desert. This "broken wheel" appears in The Waste Land in the figure of the slow and cruel turning of the year with its rainless spring and endless winter. There is also the mechanical wheel of the "Unreal city" envisioned by Madame Sosostris as a spectral ring circumambulated by the living dead. The wheels and rings associated with the Earth Mother and her modern priestess-sorceress are drawn in antithesis to those transcending wheels and rings of the Lord's chariot envisioned by Ezekiel.[2] And the Sibyl, with her ritual "Descent into Hell," is diametrically opposed to this aspiring "Son of man."

The "personage" of The Waste Land, Tiresias, is a degenerate "Son of man." He sees through the eyes of prophets and saints, and, in the character of the "I" at the end of the poem, he receives divine instruction. But he has been blinded by a goddess whose sexual vanity he disturbed and, more disillusioned than enlightened, he has "walked" among the "crowds of people, walking round in a ring," entrapped in a woman's vision of the world. From this disenchanted and prophetic perspective, Tiresias perceives the sights and sounds of the maternal underworld, that is, the materialistic universe of modern man. The wheels that he hears are not those of the Lord's chariot carrying the "Son of man" heavenwards, but those of Mrs. Porter's taxi carrying the son of woman downwards, in his moral descent that is, for Sweeney is animalized or feminized humanity. Like the man who presents himself in the hyacinth garden for his annual mid-summer sacrifice, Sweeney is bound to woman's seasonal cycle, arriving each spring at Mrs. Porter's. His transport is clearly not spiritual but sexual and mechanical: Mrs. Porter is a "rented" vehicle of pleasure, a "human engine" waiting for her customers to come "like a taxi throbbing waiting."

The "guiding hand" which steers Sweeney's taxi, which holds the "wicked pack of cards," and which spins the Wheel of Fortune, is the hand which conducts the man of the modern metropolis on his spiritual decline. Mrs. Porter and Madame Sosostris are figures of contemporary decadence, historical manifestations of the archetypal Sibyl. They are modern priestesses of the ancient female mysteries, which Eliot portrays as essentially misleading and anachronistic in a Christian era (since they are pre-moral or "unmoral" and do not involve a ritual of purgation and salvation). When the "Wheel" is out of the "controlling hands" of man, woman's witchery does not conserve the natural stability of the (human) universe but contributes, even promotes, its falling to waste and ruin. Every scene of "initiation" features a woman who has lost control of her original priestly function and shows no "sense" of greater mystery: the hyacinth girl receives the sacrificial "Hyacinths" but fails to recall their religious significance; Madame Sosostris divines an eternal living death without any sign of rebirth, the typist sets the scene of a ritual recreation only to succumb to the clerk's uninstructed "assaults," and the last Thames-daughter suffers a "dissociation of sensibility"--she "can connect nothing with nothing."

"Gerontion," which prefigures Tiresias, also disfigures the Sibyl, personifying the deceptive passages and corridors of history as an archetypal "She." History is animated by a feminine "cunning," which "[g]uides us by vanities" and "whispering ambitions." The "personage" of the poem, Gerontion, represents two ages of decadence, the Rome of antiquity (Petronius' Rome) and modern Europe. He recalls Swinburne's old Roman in the "Hymn to Proserpine," who represents the transitional state of the Empire, nostalgic for its familiar but dissolute goddess cults and apprehensive of the newly instituted Christianity. Eliot's hero, unlike Swinburne's, however, cannot sing "the death song of spiritual decadence," but succumbs to a condition of religious inertia. He welcomes neither the ferocious "Son of man" ("Christ the tiger") nor the Magna Mater (with her spring festivals of "depraved May" or cruel April). He regrets that his "passion" (for Christ, for woman) has been "lost" or "adulterated" by female spiritualists (like Madame de Tornquist, "shifting candles") and sensualists (like Fresca, "exciting the membrane"). Failing to embrace a "higher love," Gerontion withdraws from both Christ and woman and retires into solitary somnolence where he witnesses his spiritual demise.

Tiresias is another "old man" looking back through his universal memory at the history of mankind which, in The Waste Land, is also characterized by a decadent "She"; the ages of the Sibyl, of Cleopatra, of Elizabeth I, and finally, of Fresca are presented here. He observes his own demise in the character of others. He witnesses the blinding of the man on his return from the garden, the vain performance of the clerk on the typist's divan, the pathetic knee-raising "event" in the canoe. His vision, like Gerontion's, is arrested by the sexual degeneracy of modern times and particularly by the bewitching depravity of women. But, unlike Gerontion, Tiresias witnesses a "sign" of possible salvation.

Tiresias suffers from the same spiritual impotence that eventually undoes Gerontion and he suffers a fate "worse than death" at the hands of woman who has blinded and cast him into her labyrinthine underworld. But the wisdom of prophets, saints and gods returns him to his "sense" and, in the reforming character of "I," he interprets the instructive voice of the thunder. It is the three DAs of Prajapati, whose message, "give, sympathize, control," which he "shores against his ruins." The Waste Land ultimately points to an emerging "Son of man" who could acquire enough moral strength and self-mastery to ascend from the labyrinth, free imself from the natural bondage of woman, and establish a rule of a different "order."

* * * *

"The eternal enemy of the absolute" of "Conversation Galante" is a satirical portrait of the illusory female who inspires the "mad poetics" of romanticism. In a revealing "conversation" with an actual woman, the speaker discovers the emptiness of the ideal. She is unveiled for what she "really" is, a projection of "our own vacuity," the false dream of poets. He is particularly perturbed by the sentimental pose and imperious air she has adopted and ridicules himself for having fallen for the mask. Ironically, the woman is not engaged in the conversation of "Conversation Galante." Rather, in dramatic monologue, the speaker addresses her as the subject of his disillusionment or as the image of his inanity, and her two lines serve merely as cues to his own witty lament. Eliot identifies with those "realists [who] have been irritated to denounce" the "idealizing" of "reciprocal feelings of man and woman towards each other."[3] But in debunking romanticism and exposing the insubstantiality of ideal femininity, Eliot negates the real possibility of reciprocity between the sexes and the existence of a genuinely thoughtful, feeling woman.

In "Conversation Galante," Eliot exposes one unreality (the "vacuity" of sentimentalism) only by creating another (the "vacuity" of woman) and fails to supply a full human character with a capacity to reflect and engage in a meaningful dialectic. Instead, he draws a female figure as the antithesis of the ideal and, in his over-reaction to the poetics of the past, he overlooks the real, female potential.

There is no genuine dialectic between characters of opposite sex in Eliot's early poems, between, that is, the male persona and the female characters (or between the poet and his female audience). "She" is never addressed, but, rather, categorically denounced in his stereotypical presentation of the interplay between the essentially antithetical sexes. In the mind of various personae, including that of the "androgynous" Tiresias, this interplay takes the form of a socio-sexual game which inevitably ends in mutual abuse and stalemate (implying a Kantian and not a Hegelian dialectic, there being no synthesis but eternal and fruitless opposition). It is not fair play; the woman is excluded (since she is caricatured as witless) or she is "suspect, thought to be in league" against the male protagonist.

"Prufrock" exaggerates and satirizes the difference between man and woman by presenting a male persona obsessed with "overwhelming," if muddled, metaphysical questions and female characters engrossed in empty-headed, pretentious social chatter. He feels victimized by an even more "overwhelming" sensual femininity--bare arms, wafting perfumes, the flutter of a dress and voluptuous mermaids who refuse to enchant him with their song. Prufrock's meditations are characteristically morbid; he sees himself as Lazarus returned from the grave and he identifies with the prophet whose head was "brought in upon a platter" during Salomé's unveiling dance. In the image of sensual woman, Prufrock intuits his own mortality. He prefigures Tiresias, who has "foresuffered all," when he says, ". . . I have known the arms already, known them all," and he foreshadows his return to the dead in the following line--"[a]rms that are braceleted and white and bare,"--an allusion to Donne:

> When my grave is broke up again
> Some second guest to entertain
> (For graves have learned that woman-head
> To be more than only a bed.)
>   And he that digs it, spies
> A bracelet of bright hair about the bone. . . .[4]

"Whispers of Immortality" presents Donne and another morbid metaphysician, Webster, in ironic juxtaposition to sensual, superficial Grishkin. The poem not only categorizes and satirizes male and female differences--man's abstract mentality and woman's animality--it also parodies the dialectical form of metaphysical poetry. While Donne's love poems aim at a synthesis between sensual and intellectual realms through metaphorical hyperbole, Eliot exaggerates the antithesis by polarizing male and female characters. Grishkin is an artist of sorts, a foreign prima donna whose epithets "nice" and "friendly" expose her blasé personality and conceal a dark, formidable nature. "Uncorseted" she is as sensual and as lovable as one of Webster's "breastless creatures underground" and as savage as one of Baudelaire's courtesans. As the male poet and playwright ascend to metaphysical heights where they engage their "thought" on the mind-body problem, the female, Grishkin, emerges in an atavistic light, descending to the "rank" of "Brazilian jaguar" stalking the "scampering marmoset." Grishkin, in her "arboreal gloom," presents an ironic contrast to the men in their existential angst. The last stanza of the poem does not arrive at an elevating synthesis of mind and body, or male and female, but rather at an image of the hopelessness of contact. The metaphysicals revolve ludicrously around Grishkin's natural charm--"And even the Abstract Entities/ Circumambulate her charm." The physics of attraction is contradicted by the metaphysics of opposition, forcing a pessimistic conclusion from dualists and dialecticians: "No contact possible to flesh/ Allayed the fever of the bone." There can be no "real" meeting between the sexes and the poetic brotherhood, "our lot," makes a sterile retreat into the "dry ribs" of philosophical treatises for consolation: "But our lot crawls between dry ribs/ To keep our metaphysics warm."

Eliot ridicules the "airy" pretentiousness of philosophers and _prima donnas_ alike, but he is not ironic in his presentation of the hyperbolic polarization of the sexes. He is determined to debunk the tradition of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which idealizes their relation, and he goes so far as to cast the woman as brutal nature, showing the absolute impossibility of a fully human exchange. She is "flesh"; he is "dry" bone. She reeks of animality; he aspires to the absolute. She is a reminder to him of his mortality so that he cannot feel desire without, at the same time, sensing death.

"The Burial of the Dead" reflects the same antithesis found in "Whispers of Immortality" and even the same formal pattern. The "hyacinth girl" passage, like the Grishkin passage, follows a morbid, prophetic pronouncement on mortality. She is "wet" and sensual, while the "Son of man" is dry and shadowy.

The "Son of man" passage draws collectively upon Old Testament speakers. Tiresias may be thought of as a compound seer, deriving his wisdom from Ecclesiastes, Ezekiel, Isaiah, Job and also from the New Testament, from the Revelation of John. But perhaps he sees most clearly with the vision of the preacher in Ecclesiastes, who observes that all is vain and vexatious in this world, the folly and evil of youth, and the forthcoming disaster, the waste land. Above all, he finds woman to be the most mortifying element of life "under the sun":

> And I find more bitter than death the woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands: whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her: but the sinner shall be taken by her.
> Behold, this I have found saith the preacher, counting one by one, to find out the account:
> Which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: one man among a thousand have I found but a woman among all those have I not found.[5]

The preacher finds no good woman; nor does Tiresias as he recounts scene after scene in his universal memory. (And the only good man he finds is the one undergoing initiation, the blind march through the purgatorial wilderness.) He discovers, instead, the "Lady of the Rocks" with a passion for "strange webs" which "snares and nets" more than Eastern merchants. He also finds the "guiding hand[s]" of Madame Sosostris and her sister Sibyls, which bind the fool to her Wheel of Fortune, to her vision of material prosperity. Like the preacher of Ecclesiastes, Tiresias witnesses the folly of man and particularly the "vanity" of youth in the impertinent character of the clerk ("He knows his way with women and that's that!"[33]). With prophetic insight he can fortell the rest, the approaching cataclysm when--

> . . . desire shall fail . . .
> Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.[6]

The climactic moment in the "Hyacinths" scene suggests the crucial moment in Ecclesiastes when desire fails, when the spirit of man is returned to its source after having been wastefully spent on woman, when her armful of flowers are turned to a "handful of dust" and the earth becomes "as it was" in the beginning, a barren and desolate sea.

The "Son of man" passage contains various Biblical and literary allusions, which underline a grave human weakness and point to man's incapacity to meet God or to transcend the "vanity and vexation" which characterizes his mortal condition. The symbols of the "shadow" and "red rock" are prominent among the "broken images" signifying a spiritual waste land and appear to be ominously interrelated with "fear in a handful of dust":

> There is shadow under this red rock,
> (Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
> And I will show you something different from either
> Your shadow at morning striding behind you
> Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
> I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

The "shadow" may derive from the foreboding image in Ecclesiastes--

> . . . it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God.[7]

or from Job--"(For we are but of yesterday, and know nothing, because our days upon earth are a shadow . . .).[8] But it may also derive from Beaumont and Fletcher's Philaster[9] where woman is implicated in the grave foolery of man, vexing his good soul and haunting his days so that he becomes but a shadow of himself:

> . . . foolish man,
> That reads the story of a woman's face
> And dies believing it, is lost forever;
> How all the good you have is but a shadow,
> I' the morning with you, and at night behind you
> Past and forgotten. . . .

Shadowy undertones of femininity in the "Son of man" passage may be the symbolic synthesis of prejudicial images of woman, drawn from such disparate sources as Ecclesiastes and Elizabethan drama. The Old Testament woman, who entwines man in her worldly ways, to the neglect of his God, thereby bringing upon him a fate "more bitter than death," appears "to be in league" with the Elizabethan woman, who deceives man into thinking her virtuous and true, only to mislead him from the real Absolute and the true path to virtue. The implicit message to be gathered from this manipulation of imagery is a traditional one. He who loses his soul to woman is lost forever; she only catches a sinner and can never be trusted. Eliot's reference to Webster in the "Datta" passage of part V amplifies this point:

> --ô Men
> That lye upon your death-beds, and are haunted
> With howling wives, neere trust them, they'le re-marry
> Ere the worme pierce the winding sheete: ere the Spider
> Make a thinne curtaine for your Epitaphes.

Ben Jonson's "Song, that Women are but Men's Shadows" may also be recalled in this context:

> Follow a shadow, it still flies you;
> Seem to fly it, it will pursue:
> So court a mistress, she denies you;
> Let her alone, she will court you.
> Say, are not women truly, then,
> Styled but the shadows of us men?
> At morn and even, shades are longest;
> At noon they are short or none:
> So men are weakest, they are strongest,
> But grant us perfect, they're not known.

The implication, here, is that the perfect man, like the sun at high noon, casts no shadow, and that, in his becoming, or in his decline (that is to say, in his imperfect state of being), man is engaged with woman who, in one way or another, is but a reflection of his weakness.

Eliot's personage intends to point out "something different" from mere manly imperfection, "something" more devastating, like the impending waste land, the soul forever lost, the "fear in a handful of dust" that this shadowy female implies. Grover Smith speculates that--

> In some tangential way the symbol of the shadow relates to sex and to the woman with whom the quester fails. Tiresias is recollecting an incident of his past, when in his vigour he played the part not of Fisher King but of Grail knight. A kind of death occurred in a garden. Fear vanquished him; the reality of love with which the hyacinth girl confronted him was overwhelming.[10]

Two earlier poems included in The Waste Land fragments help elucidate the connection between sex, the shadow and the quest and the symbol connecting them is "the red rock" which signifies a sacrificial altar. "The Death of Saint Narcissus" (dated around 1915) prefigures the "Son of man" passage quoted above:

> Come under the shadow of this gray rock
> Come in under the shadow of this gray rock
> And I will show you a shadow different from either
> Your shadow sprawling over the sand at daybreak, or
> Your shadow leaping behind the fire against the red rock:
> I will show you his bloody cloth and limbs
> And the grey shadow on his lips. (95)

The transformation of "grey rock" to "red rock" indicates a sacrificial event which spatters the rock with blood. St. Narcissus, it appears, is no true saint, though he undertakes the usual saintly trials and tribulations. Mistaking self-mutilation for self-surrender, solitariness for humility, he succeeds only in glorifying his own vain person, circumventing divine communion in narcissistic, or onanistic, ecstasy:

> . . . he knew that he had been a fish
> With slippery white belly held tight in his own fingers,
> Writhing in his own clutch, his ancient beauty
> Caught fast in the pink tips of his new beauty.
> . . . .
> So he became a dancer to God.
> Because his flesh was in love with burning arrows
> He danced on the hot sand
> Until the arrows came.
> As he embraced them with his white skin surrendered
>   itself to the redness of blood, and satisfied him.
> Now he is green, dry and stained
> With the shadow in his mouth. (97)

"Exequy" is another "sacrificial" poem, which connects the "Son of man" passage, its "red rock" and "shadow" of death, to the scene that follows in the hyacinth garden. Shades of Baudelaire, Laforgue and Frazer may be discerned in this poem which presents a metaphor of love-making and features "persistent lovers" on a mythic "pilgrimage" (101). The male lover becomes a Hyacinthus, "a local deity of love," in a "sacramental" (originally, "sacrificial") "exercise," which, as in "Circe's Palace," is performed among fountain and flowers. The "grateful garlands" to be hung around the "athletic marble form" marking his "suburban tomb" are not "fanged and red" but they are "flowers of deflowered maids "signifying the modern equivalent of a fatal, mythical femininity. The persona of "Exequy" sees himself, like the persona of Cythère, as a sacrifice to Venus, "self-immolating on the mound" (Mons Veneris). But he makes no appeal to God and recognizes his performance to be as vain as that of St. Narcissus, who consorts with his own destruction. At the moment of his "crisis" (pre-figuring the climactic moment in the hyacinth garden), he hears "a breathless chuckle underground."

As a temple priestess of the ancient "cult of the Magna Mater," the hyacinth girl may signify one of those "unholy loves" to whom St. Augustine refers; and the "whore" of the modern city, in the figure of the harlot queens and the screen idol, Fresca (a "lowly . . . Magdalene") may derive from a specific Biblical source, the "whore of Babylon" of the Revelation of John. Valerie Eliot indicates that Eliot originally intended to present his "Unreal city" as a modern Babylon in antithesis to the city of God (127-28) and John, not Tiresias, was to have appeared as "personage" in "The Burial of the Dead": "(I John saw these things and heard them)" (9). In the Revelation, John addresses seven Asian centers of Christian worship, whose churches are compromised by the worship of the "whore," that is, the Magna Mater of the Oriental Cults:

> Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols.[11]

Among these cities is Ephesus, where the great temple to Artemis (Diana) was erected, and Smyrna.[12] Corresponding to these "decadent" cities of antiquity are the modern European and Middle Eastern cities of The Waste Land with their "falling towers": "Jerusalem Athens Alexandria/ Vienna London." Mrs. Porter is compared, in the notes, to Diana, whose ancient center is Ephesus, and Mr. Eugenides imports a degenerate form of worship from his home town, Smyrna. The "whore of Babylon" is presented as a "queen" who "hath glorified herself and lived deliciously "though she has compelled men to sacrifice their souls and damn themselves forever. The rich detail of her attire is reflected in the glittery, "celestial" image of Fresca and in Cleopatra's throne room, burning on the water:

> . . . the great whore that settleth upon many waters. . . . was arrayed in purple and scarlet color, and decked with gold and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication. . . .[13]

The "great whore" is the "eternal enemy" of God and the martyrs of Christ for she is "drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."[14] Eliot's "whore," in the figure of the hyacinth girl, initiates a bloody (genital) sacrifice, making martyrs out of men, and Magnus Martyr is among the "falling towers" of Christendom. The waters upon which "the whore sitteth," discovers John, are "peoples, and multitudes, and nations, and tongues." The "whore" in The Waste Land pollutes the waters of London, and it is her "violet light" (her "purple and scarlet color") that looms about the five falling cities. Babylon is "the habitation of devils and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird"[15] while Eliot's "Unreal city" is the cage of the degenerate Sibyl, whose voice can be linked to the nightingale's, an "unclean and hateful bird" calling to "dirty ears."

Eliot's treatment of the female figure as an image of metropolitan decadence set in antithesis to God's heavenly Jerusalem is derived from a Biblical tradition and from a comparable tradition in classical mythology which contrasts Apollo and his lofty Olympus with the Sibyl and her underworld labyrinth, emblematic (in The Satyricon) of decadent Rome. As early as 1911, Eliot envisioned "human degradation in twentieth century cities" in the figure of a mythic female. "In his first blasphemous poem," writes Lyndall Gordon,

> God appears to be a sexual monster, a degenerate female who entraps her victims. Here [Eliot] contrasts the enlightened view of the universe . . . with his own comic fantasy of an Absolute with arbitrary powers sitting in the middle of a geometric net like a syphilitic spider.[16]

Eliot may have derived his female figure from Frazer's description of the corruptive influence of the Magna Mater on ancient civilization. The chapter of Adonis, Attis, Osiris entitled "Oriental Religions in the West" relates the fall of Rome to the "spread of the religion of the Great Mother," which "in the later days of paganism spread over the Roman Empire, and saturate[d] the European peoples with alien ideals [that] gradually undermined the whole fabric of civilization."[17] Frazer's rationalist bias overwhelms his historical sense of the religious state of decadent Rome in a description which is more anachronistic than euhemeristic. He lumps together the doctrine of Christian salvation along with pre-Christian, pre-Zoroastrian myths of regeneration in order to denounce the whole "superstitious" lot in favour of a more "manly" enlightenment. Frazer is excited and worried by "the barbarous and cruel character of the worship [of the Ancient Goddess], with its frantic excesses [which] was doubtless repugnant to the good taste and humanity of the Greeks." He is particularly scandalized by the "effeminate priests" who "in the days of Augustine . . . still paraded the streets and squares of Carthage with whitened faces, scented hair, and mincing gait" and by the withdrawal from public life of men initiated into the selfish, "immoral" quest for salvation. In an abrupt reversal of the Bible, Frazer claims it was Oriental Mother worship which, in fact, led to man's search for the city of God, gelding his patriotic and heroic spirit, and "undermining the whole fabric of civilization":

> All . . . was changed by the spread of Oriental religions which inculcated the communion of the soul with God and its eternal salvation as the only objects worth living for. . . . The inevitable result of this selfish and immoral doctrine was to withdraw the devotee more and more from public service, to concentrate his thoughts on his own spiritual emotions, and to breed in him a contempt for the present life. . . . The saint and the recluse . . . displac[ed] the old ideal of the patriot and hero. . . . The earthly city seemed poor and contemptible to men whose eyes beheld the City of God. . . .[18]

Frazer does not present a theory of religious evolution so much as an archetypal myth of rebirth which is variously manifested throughout cultural history in the figure of the Dying God--Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Dionysos, Mithra, and Christ. He divides history into those dark ages of religion, preceding and following the classical period, and the modern period, which finds the "Oriental invasion" to be "ebbing still":

> The revival of Roman law, of the Aristotelian philosophy, of ancient art and literature at the close of the Middle Ages, marked the return of Europe to native ideals of life and conduct, to saner, manlier views of the world. The long halt in the march of civilization was over. The tide of the Oriental invasion had turned at last. It is ebbing still.[19]

Eliot is concerned to show, in The Waste Land, the "ebbing" of the "religion of the Great Mother," by presenting (as Petronius did) in its decadence. He is wary, however, of Frazer's rationalism,[20] and he criticizes anthropologists Jane Harrison, Durkheim, and Lévy Bruhl, as well as Frazer, for giving no explanation of religious ritual "in terms of need," for showing no "intuitive sympathy."[21] He does not find the "key" to escape from "the prison-house of darkness" constructed by ignorance and vanity, as Frazer did, in scientific enlightenment,[22] and he rejects the stoic attitude in favour of "Christian humility."[23] Eliot compares the decadence of Ancient Rome with the "futility and anarchy" he perceives in contemporary history on the basis that both ages failed to satisfy a religious need that is as fundamental to the human being as the sexual need. "Gerontion" and The Waste Land appear to demonstrate the chaos and decline of the secular world and the lamentable condition of mankind, when sex is corrupted by the dissolution of religion and the want of spiritual guidance. What Eliot shares with the Bible and with Frazer is a female figure of decadence. The Bible presents "vanity and vexation" in the figure of carnal woman, of corruption and damnation in the figure of the "whore" or "sorceress" or harlot queen. Frazer blames the collapse of the manly pillars of society on the effeminate "religion of the Great Mother," while Eliot envisions moral degeneracy and diminished spiritual vitality in the archetypal figure of the Sibyl, a "wicked" and "withered" mythic femininity. In "Gerontion," secular history is, itself, given a Sibyl-like character, with its maze-like confusions and beguiling "whispers of immortality":

Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities. Think now
She gives when our attention is distracted with such
  supple confusions
That the giving famishes the craving.

The straight way to salvation is by-passed for her crooked way; "she" forces the rejection of Christ, and "tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree." Gerontion, writes Lyndall Gordon,

> thinks of history as a mistress, and secular leaders as her dupes. She panders to men's vanities and deludes them with bogus favours, sometimes indeed granting them more than they expect, but in the end leaving them graceless and baffled. Through the ages she toys with and betrays the human race. Most immediately, through the Great War she betrays Western pride in progress, knowledge and civilization. History induces men to forsake the salvation plot for her own tortuous plots. In this passage Gerontion denounces secular ambition as a reasonable alternative to faith.[24]

Whether "She" represents "defunctive" history or decadent modernity or degenerate "nature," Eliot's female figure is the "eternal enemy of the absolute." Eliot selects from Biblical and classical mythology only negative characters such as the Apostle's Jezebel, Petronius' Sibyl, St. Augustine's Cybele and Dante's Francesca to articulate his image of woman. He does not, however, present comparable male figures in order to demonstrate the chaos and decline of contemporaneity. Eliot's mythic method denies the appearance of positive female characters in his poetry and rejects a romantic tradition in comparative mythology (promoted by Robert Graves in the twentieth century) which idealizes the "Great Mother." An examination of his female figure in contrast to such idealized femininity may help clarify the antithesis between matriarchal and patriarchal myth (or religion) implied in his work and may elucidate the misogynous tradition from which she emerges.

Anthropological inquiry into the "cult of the Magna Mater" began in the nineteenth century with the studies of J. J. Bachofen, a German scholar who, in turn, significantly influenced the work of Cambridge anthropologists (Harrison, Frazer, Gilbert Murray, F. M. Cornford).[25] Bachofen discerns a precise evolutionary pattern from matriarchy to patriarchy, which he outlines in four stages: Aphroditean, Demetrian, Dionysian and Apollonian. Though he assumes teleological superiority of the Apollonian, he glorifies the Demetrian phase and argues for its essential historical role in the transition from a purely naturalistic to a purely transcendental consciousness. The matriarchal age, he explains, cultivated the sense of mystery, "the true essence of every religion," from the woman's sense of maternity, and he argues strongly against those scholars who would contrast it with Hellenism as "only an era of decadence." "Wherever woman dominates religion or life," observes Bachofen, "she will cultivate the mysterious."[26] Mystery, he claims, is rooted in woman's very nature, manifested in her experience of childbearing, and "in the reciprocal relation between perishing and coming into being, disclosing death as the indispensable forerunner of higher rebirth." Eliot rejects Bachofen's interpretation of religion as essentially mysterious (given the irreligious or heretical character of his ladies of mystery) and the claim that maternity is the natural forerunner to transcendentalism. Mystery and maternity are used, precisely, to convey "an era of decadence" in The Waste Land. In her wisdom, Madame Sosostris shows no acquaintance with higher (or lower) rebirth: she is no "sage-femme." Lil's sense of maternity is less awesome than awful, less biological than chemical, and she represents the absolute antithesis of Bachofen's idealized motherhood:

> At the lowest, darkest stages of human existence the love between the mother and her offspring is the bright spot in life, the only light in the moral darkness, the only joy and profound misery. . . . The relationship which stands at the origin of all culture, of every virtue, of every nobler aspect of existence, is that between mother and child; it operates in a world of violence as the divine principle of love, of union, of peace.[27]

Lil's maternity brings neither love nor peace and only a threatened sense of union to "a world of violence," war-torn London. As a figure of motherhood in a dark stage of existence, she symbolizes the quintessence of "moral darkness" and misery. Her maternal affection amounts to an artificially induced miscarriage; it is hardly the "indispensable forerunner to higher rebirth" but the foreshadowing of a civilization's self-destruction.

Just as Eliot neglects to find, in motherhood, a hope for social rehabilitation, he neglects to find any saving religious significance in woman's apprehension of the mystery of nature. He seems "intuitively [un]sympathetic" in his various female caricatures of mystery. While the gods, prophets and saints receive a traditional reverence, the priestess is transformed into a shade from the modern underground, a charlatan spiritualist or a common prostitute. The Revelation of John discloses "MYSTERY" to be the particular province of the "whore": "And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."[28] Ecclesiastes contends that the man (or woman) who makes himself overly wise is but a self-destructive fool. "There is no man," the preacher observes,

> that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power in the day of death . . . neither shall wickedness deliver those that are given to it.[29]

Through the eyes of the prophets, Tiresias observes Madame Sosostris, the "wisest woman in Europe," presiding over the mysteries of "our little age," with her Sphinx-like knowledge. A spiritualist, she has no power over the spirit, and she glibly delivers an oracle of death though she has no power in the day of judgement. She is at the Wheel but it is out of control, the waste land befalls her era, and she is not delivered by her "wicked pack of cards." While the Sphinx sits "under the sun," keeping, as J. E. Cirlot notes, "watch over an ultimate meaning which must remain forever beyond the understanding of man," the "Son of man" should know better, seeking deliverance from her mysteries and the flux of the natural cosmos in order to find "a peace which passeth understanding."

Not even the "wisest woman," nor the most practised mid-wife, can know, according to Ecclesiastes, the mystery of the generative womb:

> As thou knowest not what is the way of the spirit, nor how the bones do grow in the womb of her that is with child: even so thou knowest not the works of God who maketh all.[30]

Eliot confirms this impossible wisdom in the caricatures of Madame Sosostris and Lil, who show no knowledge (nor even concern) for the mystery of (re)birth, nor any knowledge of the "spirit" who made them; they reveal an incapacity for generating new life of any sort.

J. B. Vickery explains that Eliot found, inimical to his sense of religious mysticism, the "malevolent spirit of the magic art," which is central to "the creative myth of the dying and reviving God in Frazer." "For the primitive mind in all periods of history," he writes,

> there is an overwhelming urge to "know how to control or at least placate and cajole the powerful gods, spirits, and forces which rule man and his world. The nostrums and techniques for wielding power without troubling to gain the true wisdom of spiritual presences constitute magic. Since at least as early as "A Cooking Egg" Eliot was interested in, scornful of, fascinated and disturbed by this manifestation of the human mind. With Madame Sosostris of The Waste Land and Dusty and Doris of "Sweeney Agonistes" this theme assumes a major place in Eliot's poetry. . . . Here Eliot shows how the impulse to religious consciousness is being corrupted and warped into the opposite of itself.[31]

Vickery fails to point out that Eliot shows this "malevolent spirit" to be a manifestation peculiar to the female mind which he caricatures not only in the figures of Madame Blavatsky and Madame Sosostris but also in Madame de Tornquist and Fräulein von Kulp turning wheels or "shifting the candles" in a "dark room" (von Kulp suggests mankind's culpable mistress, the "She" that signifies "contemporary history"). Mrs. Cammel is linked, through Fresca, to Lady Katzegg, whose "guiding hand" conducts her rise to stardom and her bewitching effect on the rabble. Eliot rejects magic and mystery, as much as he rejects rationalism, for failing to satisfy the religious needs of mankind. But while he ridicules the feminine character of mystery and presents a figure of matriarchy which has lost its grip on the natural world, he neglects to ridicule the "manlier" character of enlightenment.

Eliot may have been impressed with Jane Harrison's description of matriarchy which, she explains,

> gave to women a false prestige because a magical prestige. With patriarchy came inevitably the facing of a real fact, the fact of the greater natural weakness of women. Man the stronger, when he outgrew his belief in the magical potency of women, proceeded by a pardonable logic to despise and enslave her as the weaker. The future held indeed a time when the non-natural, mystical truth came to be apprehended, that the stronger had a need, real and imperative, of the weaker.[32]

Modern man, represented in "Gerontion" and in The Waste Land, has not quite outgrown "his belief in the magical potency of women." He still patronizes Madame de Tornquist and Fräulein von Kulp though, as Gerontion recognizes, they are but "vacant shuttles [that]/ Weave the wind." The modern quester is still seduced by the mystery ritual of woman though it has, after the "Hyacinths" scene, degenerated into the bewitchery of clairvoyante and courtesan. The hyacinth girl, herself, is perhaps a religious anachronism giving--

> . . . too late
> What's not believed in, or if still believed,
> In memory only, reconsidered passion.

The "drowned Phoenician Sailor" awaits Madame Sosostris' turn at "the Wheel," in order to secure his future prosperity. Through her guidance, and that of various other Sibylline figures, the man in The Waste Land loses control of himself and his world, taking a reckless plunge into the maternal "ocean of chaos" which, in modern times, is manifested in the materialism and spiritual anarchy of post-war Europe.

The authoritative voice in part IV appeals to those Sons of man who would "turn the wheel and look to windward," who would, that is, make order out of the universe and receive the spirit of God. Self-control is one solution to the "vanity and vexation" of life on earth and, in addition to this, "Damyata" proposes the control of the other:

> The boat responded
> Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
> The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
> Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
> To controlling hands

The "hand expert with sail and oar" suggests the controlling powers of a fisherman, not Madame Sosostris' powers of divination or Lady Katzegg's "guiding hand." It is a fisherman figure, in the drafts, who calmly controls his senses in the face of the charming sirens' song and the wayward vessel he attempts to bring under control is definitely feminine (the manuscript shows the pronoun to be underlined):

> "Her sail to windward,"
> Said one of influence among the rest,
> "I'll see a dead man in an iron coffin
> With a crowbar row from here to hell, before
> This vessel sail to windward." (65)

Here also, the female figure is seen in antithesis to the spirit of man who would have her turned "windward"; she balks his steerage and would carry him to Hell (with Red sails/ Wide/ To Leeward . . ."). Her natural will is self-damning and betraying, not self-controlling and compliant. The allegory in this passage implies that had he, as a "Son of man," in the spirit of Christ (a "fisher of men"), controlled the scene in the garden and had not been initiated by her, had he loved with a "higher love" and sought a true "heart of light" in his intercourse with her, had he seen his own salvation instead of a female figure of betrayal in the "fore cross trees," had he seen Christ as the third "walking beside you" and not the mysterious, enchanting Sibyl, had he not given her the control of the wheel but had held it firmly in his belief in a transcendent being, then her heart would have been "beating obedient," her nature would have responded "gaily" to the superior mastery of man and the almighty Spirit by which he commands. When man gives reign to Paternal authority, even the maternal ocean of chaos, the "whirlpool" is brought under control: "the sea was calm."[33]

Bachofen observes a resurgence of matriarchy in ancient history whenever civilization has enlightened the universal mind to the neglect of religious consciousness. "In the midst of the Hellenic world," he writes, "Pythagoras . . . attempted to give a new consecration to existence and to satisfy man's profounder religious needs by reviving the mystery of the chthonian-maternal cults," adding that--

> Wherever the older mystery religion is preserved or revived, woman emerges from the obscurity and the servitude to which she was condemned amid the splendour of Ionian Greece and restored to all her pristine dignity.[34]

Gerontion and Tiresias witness the adulteration, and not the restoration, of "man's profounder religious needs" in the "ebbing" mysteries, the rituals and magic arts of the modern priestess[35] and when, by some witchery, a woman like Fresca rises from obscurity she shows none of the "pristine dignity" of, say, Praxitele's "Venus Anadyomene." She rises only to fall, a "lowly, weeping Magdalene," or like the Thames nymphs who sink into depravity. Having no real wisdom or integrity but only, as Jane Harrison says, "a false prestige because a magical prestige," her triumph is bound to yield her own collapse and, with her, the crumbling towers of civilization including Magnus Martyr's "splendour of Ionian white and gold."

Matriarchy is divided into two historical eras, argues Bachofen. Aphroditean culture is "hetaeric" and wholly subservient to natural law, recognizing its principle in the primitive reproductive cycle of the swamp which it seeks to conserve by imitative magic. (Frazer's "fertility cults" generally correspond to this notion.) Demetrian matriarchy is a later cultural development, marked by a "regulated naturalism" manifested in conjugal law and in agricultural beginnings. This is, accordingly, the age which recognizes and nurtures mystery and which is so essential in bringing about the transformation of religious consciousness from a superstitious and fatalistic (and "feminine") frame of mind which seeks to control natural forces through magic and cruel rituals, to one that is enlightened and transcendental (and "masculine"). (Bachofen equates the Sibyl with Themis, who "embodied the law of matter" and was the original source of prophecy and wisdom.)[36] He hails Rome with its imperial law as the greatest accomplishment of ancient civilization, for having emancipated mankind from natural law and for having gone furthest in developing a moral code and an "Apollonian" patriarchal religion.[37] But Rome could never have evolved so far, he argues, without a Demetrian or mystery culture;

> it could never have accomplished the triumph over the seductions of Egypt that was glorified and one might say imaged in the death of the last wholly Aphroditean-hetaeric Candace of the Orient (Cleopatra), and in Augustus' contemplation of her lifeless body.[38]

Bachofen locates the "ultimate defeat of Aphrodite, mother of the Aeneads" at the time of the Second Punic War, at Carthage.

The first three parts of The Waste Land are dominated by a female figure who is "Aphroditean-hetaeric" rather than Demetrian-conjugal, a lowly Magdalene rather than a classical Venus. "Aeneas' mother, with an altered," that is to say, modern, "face," appears, in the drafts, not yet defeated and at the height of her glory, enrapturing "thousands." Stetson and his "frère" meet in the underworld after the First Punic War at Mylae, before the "seductions of Egypt" are subdued, and by the second part of the poem, "Aeneas" has not yet abandoned Dido[39] but is entrapped in her "laquearia." Had Augustus appeared, he would have been "troubled" and "confused" by the continuing presence of Cleopatra, lurking about her "burnished Chair" and, by the time St. Augustine arrives in Carthage, Cybele is "ebbing still," long after her "defeat" in the Second Punic War.

Bachofen insists that matriarchy is an historical concept, not just a "poetic fancy," and he glorifies the manly and heroic history traditionally inspired by a divine Matron. At the same time, he laments the unheroic age of "contemporary history" (though without pointing to a decadent femininity). He points out that, according to Aristotle, "all warlike peoples serve the woman" and, he continues,

> the study of later epochs teaches the same lesson: to defy danger, to seek adventure, and to serve beauty--these virtues betoken the fullness of a nation's youth. Present conditions make all this look like fiction. But the highest poetry, more vibrant and moving than any fantasy, is the reality of history. . . . The matriarchal age, with its figures, deeds, upheavals, is beyond the poetry of cultivated but enfeebled times. . . . When the power to perform high deeds flags, the flight of the spirit falters also, and incipient rot permeates all spheres of life at once.[40]

Eliot, conversely, demonstrates the "incipient rot" characterizing modern times to be precisely the symptom of a matriarchal age and of a history corrupted by the false idealism and "whispering ambitions" of a phantom Sibyl possessing the universal mind. Gerontion is a declining figure from two decadent eras, ancient Rome and modern Europe. He, also, laments his "enfeebled times," that he was no hero at Thermopylae nor a conqueror (like Schoeneus) of Aphrodite's "salt marsh."[41] But Gerontion is partly romantic and mostly disillusioned, recognizing that history is not the "highest poetry" nor woman the greatest glory. She appears to him as an archetypal temptress, mothering nothing but propagating "impudent crimes." "She" is not a symbol of saving maternity but an image of dissolution in a patriarchal age in which "Unnatural vices/ Are fathered by our heroism."

Bachofen attributes the fall of Rome to the introduction of the Dionysian phallic cults together with the return of the cult of the Magna

Mater, whose sensualism "concealed a diminished vitality, a moral decay, which contributed more than any other cause to the decline of the ancient world." "Victories of the maternal principle over the revelation of purely spiritual paternity," he concludes,

> show how hard it has been for men, at all times and amid the most varied religious constellations, to overcome the inertia of material nature and to achieve the highest calling, the sublimation of earthly existence to the purity of the divine father principle.[42]

(Despite his romanticizing of the Mother, Bachofen's evolutionary theory is another formulation of male superiority in the misogynous tradition.)

"Gerontion" presents the struggle, in a universal, masculine mind, between Christianity and historical materialism with its corrupt "She," the "eternal enemy of the absolute." "She" would subvert the truly heroic quest for purgation and transcendence with her spiritualism and her sensualism, and "she" abounds in the modern age in the character of Madame de Tornquist, Fräulein von Kulp, Mrs. Cammel, and Fresca, whose "slattern[ly] sensuality is revealed in the drafts. "She" prohibits "higher love," for as Gerontion confesses:

> I have lost my passion: why should I keep it
> Since what is kept must be adulterated?
> I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:
> How could I use them for your closer contact?[43]

Like the decadent female presence of the candle-lit "laquearia" (the reflecting "room enclosed"), this "[s]he" of "Gerontion" drowns the sense in "pungent sauces" and multiplies images of the fragmented, narcissistic self "in a wilderness of mirrors." When the spirit of man is not firmly bound in the spirit of Christ, "[S]he," the "eternal enemy of the absolute," solicits a depraved passion.

Eliot's female figure negatively demonstrates Bachofen's conjecture that woman, as she is represented in myth and history, is "material" in her thinking, "primarily physical" in her contribution to cultural development, attaching "little importance to the inner, spiritual factor." Her "religious consciousness," Bachofen asserts, seeks "higher consolation" for mortality in the mystery of the generative womb. The institution of this mystery may inspire the transcendental consciousness of man or, conversely, it may lock humanity in the "inertia of material nature." The natural cycle of life is, traditionally, associated with woman and inimical to patriarchy. Ecclesiastes observes a futile and hopeless routine in natural regeneration which Eliot parodies in "Sweeney Agonistes":

> Sweeney: Birth, and copulation and death.
> That's all, that's all, that's all, that's all,
> Birth, and copulation and death.
> Doris: I'd be bored.
> Sweeney: You'd be bored.

It is woman in The Waste Land who initiates the turn of the wheel, who conserves the dull and fruitless sexual routine, and it is a bored woman, Marie, who reveals the seasonal regularity of her life. Olympian theology rejects a primitive, naturalistic mythology, replacing "dike" or the wheel, represented by the Danaïdes, the "well nymphs," bringing seasonal rains in leaky vessels that must ceaselessly be filled, with a transcendental god, Zeus, who "ceased to be a thunderstorm" and orders one instead. "To Olympian theology, in its ignorance and ineptitude," writes Jane Harrison, "'recurrent' had come to spell 'fruitless'; the way of life was envisaged as an immutable sterility and therefore rejected."[44] The Waste Land reveals a similar pattern of usurpation; the hyacinth girl, who shows a mythic kinship to the Danaïdes, making an annual appearance with flowers that are "in season" and hair wet with spring rain or summer showers, is supplanted by the thunder or Upanishadic God, Prajapati, who speaks through the "dry" and "sterile" thunder and who, like Zeus, represents a will that transcends natural law.

Mythical matriarchal figures embody only a primitive morality. Moira, the triple goddess occasionally confused with the Eumenides, represents the prevailing will of nature and the natural superiority of the mother, prior to the establishment of free will and moral responsibility in more enlightened times. "Moira, it is true," writes F. M. Cornford,

> was a moral power; but no one had to pretend that she was exclusively benevolent, or that she had any respect for the parochial interests and wishes of mankind. Further--and this is the most important point--she was not credited with foresight, purpose, design; these belong to man and to the humanized Gods. Moira is the blind, automatic force which leaves their subordinate purposes and wills free play within their own legitimate spheres, but recoils in certain vengeance upon them the moment that they cross her boundaries.[45]

The female figure in The Waste Land manifests this primitive morality: she blinds and silences the moral conscience of man and, with "automatic hand," plays her seductive, defunctive music. Although she initiates a form of mystery ritual she shows no foresight, purpose, design." Morality, in The Waste Land, belongs to the emerging "Son of man," and to his true spiritual guide, the Biblical, Upanishadic and Greek "humanized Gods." Tiresias, it must be remembered, is blinded by the instinctive and unwarranted actions of an impulsive matriarch and restored to higher vision by a compassionate, omnipotent father.

The Oresteia of Aeschylus expresses, in poetic drama, the clash between the matriarchal Eumenides and patriarchal Apollo, of moral forces "male against female,"[46] which leads, Bachofen claims, "to the triumph of paternity over the chthonic material principle." "Myth," he writes, "as set forth by Aeschylus,"

> takes this view of the conflict between the old and the new principle in the matricide of Orestes . . . and links the great turning point of existence to the sublimation of religion. These traditions undoubtedly embody a memory of real experiences of the human race. . . . This is no dialectical opposition but a historical struggle, and the gods themselves decide its outcome. The old era dies, and another, the Apollonian age, rises on its ruins. A new ethos is in preparation, diametrically opposed to the old one. . . . on the one hand we find acceptance of nature, on the other, a transcending of nature. . . .[47]

The Waste Land presents a historical and dialectical struggle between opposing forces, "male against female," moral against "unmoral," "Son of man" against natural woman (or the "woman's part" of man) in a misogynous tradition which would embody a "memory of real experiences in the human race." The universal memory of Tiresias anticipates that of Sweeney Agonistes who recalls, from his patriarchal perspective, the deadly inertia of natural life:

> Birth, and copulation and death.
> I've been born, and once is enough.
> You don't remember, but I remember,
> Once is enough.

The ritual of regeneration is initiated by woman but Tiresias must rely on the wisdom of gods, prophets, and saints to save him from his "Descent into Hell"; ultimately, he sees through her natural routine (which is uninspiring, at best, degenerate, at worst). The decadent scenes he witnesses confirm Gerontion's disillusionment with woman and her mysteries. He rejects those "whispering ambitions" and "contrived corridors," and withdraws from the "guiding hand" of the Sibyl who would lead him, like Aeneas, through the gate of "false dreams." He aborts from her hellish underworld and ascends with the voice of the thunder: the three DAs are the fragments he shores against his ruins, giving rise to a "new ethos": "give, sympathize, control."

Perhaps the last section of The Waste Land should be seen in conjunction with the fisherman passage of part IV in the drafts. The thunder's three DAs appear in striking antithesis to the three ghostly females who at once suggest the mythic figures of the Moirae, the Eumenides and the Sirens. The firm, commanding voice of the god negates their charming song, set within the "illimitable scream/ Of a whole world . . . ," the underworld or "lower" natural world, that is, seductive, bewitching and barbaric. "She" is the grotesque guardian of a vain and vexatious, whirling Hell on earth, the "blind, automatic force" at nature's helm. But the fisherman maintains a grip on the wheel, holding her frightening apparition in abeyance, anticipating, perhaps, the saving wisdom of the thunder. En route to becoming a true "Son of man," he exorcises this female charm and casts the fatal temptress out of his vision of reality:

> On watch, I thought I saw in the fore cross trees
> Three women leaning forward, with white hair
> Streaming behind, who sang above the wind
> A song that charmed my senses, while I was
> Frightened beyond fear, horrified past horror, calm.
> (Nothing was real) for, I thought, now, when
> I like, I can wake up and end the dream.

He is the culminating figure of the misogynous quester, surpassing even Aeneas, who abandoned Dido (and Perceval who vanquished Hell) by also abandoning the Sibyl and her world of "false dreams," revealing her for what, in this literary and religious tradition, she comes to be: "Unreal."

CONCLUSION

The Waste Land marks both a transition in Eliot's work from the earlier, satirical poetry to the later, mystical or religious poetry and an essential phase in the metamorphosis of his female figure, from the comic, grotesque female of Laforgue and Corbière (the "eternal enemy of the absolute") to Dante's figure of beatitude and the figure of the Madonna ("The Lady . . ./ In a white gown," and "Virgin in meditation" in Ash Wednesday, the "Queen of Heaven" in "The Dry Salvages"). Eliot's transformation of the female, from sensual to sublime, reflects "that sublimation of passion towards which Baudelaire was always striving."[1]

Eliot claims, in "Cyril Tourneur" (1927), that "the loathing and horror . . . the hatred of life is an important phase--even, if you like, a mystical experience--in life itself."[2] The Waste Land is a poetic expression of this "mystical experience," and the "loathing and horror of life itself" describes the poem's "significant emotion." En route to achieving that "sublimation of passion," Eliot denounces the natural, sensual, living world: hence his "constant vituperations of the female" and the abundance of loathsome and horrible women in the poem. By creating female characters that are blinding and silencing like the hyacinth girl, "wicked" like Madame Sosostris, troubling and confusing like the labyrinth queens, desperate and self-destructive like Lil or betraying and treacherous like her outspoken "friend," vulgar and decadent like Fresca, seductive and sinister like the woman with "long black hair," frightening and horrifying like the three white-haired women, wasting and self-loathing like the Sibyl. Eliot demonstrates the corruption, as he sees it, of modern life in female form, thereby giving expression to an otherwise ineffable "experience" and providing the *significant* emotion with an objective correlative.

The "loathing and horror" that accompanies the female figure in *The Waste Land* is the feeling that prevails in a "transmutation of emotion."[3] Initially, the poem creates a sense of fatal attraction which is supplanted by *ennui* and disgust (as revealed in Tiresias' silent musings) and by the fisherman's mounting fear and horror. The emotion stirred by *The Waste Land* woman is orgasmic in the negative--the fisherman is ultimately "moved" to an anti-climax of feeling, a paralysis of desire. This intense decline in feeling corresponds to the deteriorating appearance of the female figure, to the *mutation* of her initial image as enchanting hyacinth girl into dreary Lil, the forbidding hysteric, the dull typist, the crumbling Thames-daughters and the fearful sea-hags. Eliot adapts Ovid's *Metamorphoses* to construct his own myth of "Philomel," the *mutation* of sensual woman into a haunting, morbid figure.

The radical transfiguration of the hyacinth girl, nubile and promising (a "Frisch . . . Wind"), terminates in the mortifying dark lady fiddling "whisper music." She is no sublime Venus or "la jeune prêtresse" who awaits him on his "pilgrimage of love," nor is she a radiant, rejuvenated Grail bride blessing him on his quest which ends, not in the courtyard amid wedding bells, but in the chapel graveyard amid "tolling bells." "She" is life, but "she" is also death; "she" reveals the full circle of natural being, the vain and vexatious "Wheel." Lacking any "higher" spirit, "she" is degenerate; her fertile garden withers into a waste land, her "sacred grove" harbours but an "empty chapel."

The Waste Land attempts to illustrate the essential incompatibility of the sexes and the essential danger and depravity of the female sex. Woman may appear, like the hyacinth girl, as an object of love and inspiration, only to betray man's "higher" purpose by guiding him, blind and speechless, to the underworld where his "passion" is adulterated and his "sense" drowned in the labyrinth of female decadence. The withered Sibyl is a projection of man's loss of faith in the mysteries of love and fertility. "She"--

> . . . Gives too late
> What's not believed in, or if still believed,
> In memory only, reconsidered passion.

Although the poem hints at a mystic passage to "another world" (31), it concentrates on the ruins of this world, on the failure of love between the sexes and, in particular, on the repugnance and antagonism of the female. Eliot exposes himself less as one of those "realists . . . irritated to denounce" literary traditions which idealize "the reciprocal feelings of man and woman towards each other" than as a misanthropist and misogynist of the highest degree. It is disheartening, as A. D. Moody observes,

> to accept that the poet who is using our language greatly is using it for purposes alien to us. Yet the simple truth of the matter is that Eliot had been working from the start for another world than the one men and women make together.[4]

Behind the "loathing and horror of life," which Eliot discerns and applauds in Tourneur's Revenger's Tragedy, is the "death motive," which may also be found in The Waste Land. The poem articulates a myth of dying in the figure of the Sibyl, who endures a physical and moral decay and in the figure of Arnaut Daniel, who dies a saving death in a purgatorial flame. Eliot's woman is damned in life *and* death; she burns in Cybele's "cauldron" of "unholy loves" like the unrepentant Thames-daughters, or like Fresca, she is bound for Francesca's circle of Hell reserved for "carnal sinners." Phlebas may suffer a physical or moral dissolution, drowning his "sense" in woman's company (like his predecessor, Prufrock), or he may suffer a "sea-change" like the reborn Ferdinand. In the drafts, the fisherman experiences a mystic passage "by water," recoiling from this world which is revealed to him in the appearance of malevolent female spirits. The exorcism of female charm is, apparently, integral to Eliot's "mystical experience." Before "that sublimation of passion" can be achieved, sensual woman must be destroyed--symbolically--by the creation of a monstrous female figure which reinforces (the poet's) disenchantment with her and her natural, "turning world." Eliot is compelled, it seems, to "do her in." as he later declares in "Sweeney Agonistes": "Any man has to, needs to, wants to/ Once in a lifetime, do a girl in."

Salvation is never clearly indicated in the poem but it is clearly "adulterated" in the guise of a woman. The Sibyl, far from being a symbol of rebirth and "New Life," is an emblem of cultural and historical, as well as sexual, degeneracy. The ghostly triad appearing in the "fore cross trees" symbolizes the "Son of man's" betrayal and presents the triple face of Hell. The "hooded" figure on the "white road" could mean salvation but, since the sex of the figure is ambiguous, salvation is doubtful. If a man, the figure may be the resurrected Christ, appearing before the disciples on the road to Emmaus, or if a woman, the figure could be the malignant Sibyl, foreshadowing the collapse of the modern world just as Petronius saw her foreshadowing the collapse of ancient Rome. This enigmatic appearance may signify, then, the resurrection of Christ or the resurgence of Cybele, the "cruel goddess" and her barbarian cults. The "murmur of maternal lamentation" may be heard accompanying the "hooded hordes" in their destructive rampage across the cities of Europe just as it was, according to Frazer, the cult of the Magna Mater that "undermined the whole fabric of an ancient civilization." Tiresias sees, alternatively, the "Son of man" and the Sibyl just as Hermas sees, alternatively, the Madonna and the Sibyl; he is at the cross-roads of religious consciousness where the "white road" to salvation intersects the winding road to Hell. Grover Smith finds a possible source to this "weird event" in a Buddhist legend recorded in H. C. Warren's Buddhism in Translations. "According to the story," writes Smith,

> a wise man meeting a woman on the highway, begged alms of her. She only laughed at him, but since as she did so she displayed her teeth, he was enabled to achieve sainthood through realizing the essential impurity of her body. . . .[5]

The moral of this story is integral to The Waste Land; man is en route to salvation once he realizes the "essential impurity" of the corporeal female, or, as Eliot puts it, the "horror of women as of unclean creatures."[6]

This is the "horror" from which Eliot's quester ultimately recoils. The fisher king no longer fishes for a source of inner vitality in her foul body, her waste land, with its "dull canal," its "decayed hole," and its "dead . . . mouth with carious teeth." He puts the "arid plain" behind him and he prepares to leave her shores, as Aeneas left Dido or as Odysseus left Circe, if not to seek "another world," then at least to establish a "saner, manlier" rule, to set his "kingdom in order" after the futility and anarchy of the matriarchal cults. It is Venus and her "infâmes cultes" from which he withdraws, casting his hopes away from "Cythère," the desolate isle of sexual love, "Île triste et noire." "She" is the "you" from whom he retreats in his mystic voyage to purgation and self-mastery:

> You over on the shore
> I left without you
> There I leave you
> Clasping empty hands I sit upon the shore
> Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
> Shall I at least set my lands in order. (79)

The route to self-realization as it appears in The Waste Land is negative and misogynous, "identifying the woman with what the poet would transcend, from the hyacinth girl to the woman who draws her long black hair out tight."[7] A. D. Moody expresses discontent with the poem's conclusion since it fails to demonstrate a realizable relation between the sexes, between natural, living woman and spiritual man, dying a mystical death and withdrawing from her sensual world. "The poet," he writes,

> has been changing his mortal passion into an ascetic purgatory, and this is to practise self-control of a profound order. . . . The effort to perfect love after Dante's fashion grows complicated when the woman would love as naturally as a boat moves on the sea. Not every woman would choose to be cast in the role of Beatrice or Isolde or Brünhilde, nor is the natural life of love only frustration and death. To resolve the living woman with his own dying in love becomes the deep motive of the poems that grow from and beyond The Waste Land--The Hollow Men, Ash-Wednesday and Marina.[8]

Eliot's purpose is, as Moody says, "alien" to an age which hopes to restore dignity and humanity to the relation between the sexes which had been so deeply alienated in the Victorian age. If Eliot fails to reconcile the sexes it is because he is still concerned to debunk the sentimentality of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Or, weary of the repulsiveness of the sexual degradation he has drawn, he may be concerned to find "that sublimation of passion" to which he said Baudelaire was always aspiring. The poet, himself, is out of touch with the times he hopes to order by his mythic method. He fails to demonstrate _any_ reciprocity between the sexes because he subscribes to a misogynous tradition that imprisons the woman in an illusory antithesis to the questing spirit of man.

NOTES

Chapter I

[1] Elizabeth Schneider, T. S. Eliot: The Pattern in the Carpet (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1975), p. 80.

[2] Schneider, pp. 80-81.

[3] Lyndall Gordon, Eliot's Early Years (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1977), pp. 29, 58, 70, 108. Also see Appendix I for Eliot's reading in mysticism and related fields.

[4] W. F. Jackson Knight, Cumaean Gates (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1936), p. 182.

[5] Elizabeth Drew, T. S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), p. 64.

[6] Grover Smith, "T. S. Eliot's Lady of the Rocks," Notes and Queries, 19 March 1949, p. 124.

[7] The "Cambridge Anthropologists" included James Frazer, Jane Harrison, Gilbert Murray, F. M. Cornford.

[8] James Frazer, Adonis Attis Osiris, Studies in the History of Oriental Religion, Part IV of The Golden Bough, A Study in Magic and Religion, third ed. (London, 1911-1915; rpt. New York: University Books, 1961), p. 201.

[9] Frazer, II, 12, 201.

[10] Frazer, I, 9, 234.

[11] Frazer, II, 1, 268-69.

[12] Frazer, II, 5, 289.

[13] Frazer, I, 9, 236.

[14] John B. Vickery, The Literary Impact of "The Golden Bough" (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1973), p. 249.

[15] "In the cyclic monotony of the Eniautos Daimon [the seasonal god]," writes Jane Harrison, "it matters little whether Death follows Resurrection or Resurrection, Death" (Jessie L. Weston, From Ritual to Romance [London, 1920; rpt. New York: Doubleday, 1957], p. 47n).

[16] Frazer, I, 10, 256.

[17] Frazer, I, 5, 315.

[18] Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays (1950; rpt. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 74; hereafter cited as TSEPP.

[19] Vickery, pp. 256-57.

[20] Frazer, I, 9, 225.

[21] Weston, p. 12.

[22] Weston, pp. 48-49.

[23] Weston, p. 49.

[24] Weston, p. 136.

[25] Weston, p. 124.

[26] Weston, p. 125.

[27] Weston, pp. 127-29.

[28] Drew, p. 63.

[29] Drew, pp. 61-62.

[30] Weston, pp. 157-58.

[31] Weston, p. 182.

[32] Weston, p. 154, quoting from Thrice-Greatest Hermes, I, trans. G. R. S. Mead.

[33] Weston, p. 155, quoting from Thrice-Greatest Hermes, I, trans. G. R. S. Mead.

[34] Weston, p. 155.

[35] Weston, p. 169.

[36] Knight, p. 144.

[37] Smith, p. 74.

[38] Smith, p. 69.

[39] Smith, "T. S. Eliot's Lady of the Rocks," p. 124.

[40] Knight, pp. 146-47.

[41] Knight, pp. 162-63.

[42] Knight, p. 7.

[43] Merlin Stone, When God was a Woman (New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1976), p. 211. Stone writes, "The Sibyls were often identified with a prophetess of Anatolia, named as Sybella, whom we may suspect has some connection with the Goddess known there as Cybele. It was, in fact, the Sibyls of Rome who were responsible for having the worship of the Anatolian Cybele brought into Rome." She proceeds to quote D. S. Russell:

> They are imitative of the Greek Sibyls who exercised a considerable influence upon pagan thought both before and after this time. The pagan Sibyl was a prophetess who, under the inspiration of the god was able to impart wisdom to men and to reveal to them the divine will. There are many varieties of such oracles in different countries and in Egypt in particular they came to have an increasing interest and significance.

[44] Knight, p. 32.

[45] J. E. Cirlot, A Dictionary of Symbols (London, 1962; rpt. New York: Philosophical Library, 1982), pp. 364-67. Cirlot emphasizes the maternal symbolism of water:

> In the Vedas, water is referred to as mâtritamâh (the most maternal) because, in the beginning, everything was like a sea without light. In India, this element is generally regarded as the preserver of life, circulating through the whole of nature, in the form of rain, sap, milk and blood. Limitless and immortal, the waters are the beginning and end of all things on earth . . . This 'fluid body' is interpreted by modern psychology as a symbol of the unconscious, that is, of the non-formal, dynamic, motivating, female side of the personality. The projection of the mother-imago into the waters endows them with various numinous properties characteristic of the mother. . . . the qualities of transparency and depth, often associated with water, go far towards explaining the veneration of the ancients for this element which, like earth, was a female principle. . . . The expressions 'risen from the waves' and 'saved from the waters' symbolize fertility, and are metaphorical images of childbirth. . . . among the symbols of the female principle are included those which figure as origins of the waters (mother, life), such as: Mother Earth, Mother of the Waters, Stone, Cave, House of the Mother, Night, House of Depth, House of Force, House of Wisdom, Forest, etc.

[46] Knight, p. 56.

[47] Knight, pp. 163-64.

[48] Knight, p. 168.

[49] Knight, p. 36.

[50] Knight, pp. 169-70. "Rome worshipped male gods first," Knight observes.

[51] Knight, p. 163.

[52] Knight, p. 162.

[53] Knight, quoting Still, pp. 162-63.

[54] Weston, p. 169.

[55] T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), p. 31. The line runs, "London, your people is bound upon the wheel!" Further reference to this work will be indicated in the text.

[56] Knight, p. 181.

[57] Smith, p. 71.

[58] It also suggests Dante's description of purgatory, a mountain rising in circular ledges on which are the various groups of repentant sinners.

[59] Weston, p. 51n.

[60] The male persona's response to the hyacinth girl has provoked radically different critical interpretations. Critics as diverse as Cleanth Brooks, in Modern Poetry and the Tradition and James E. Miller, in T. S. Eliot's Personal Waste Land, have read it as an ecstatic love response to the girl, a moment of spiritual/sexual fulfillment. Elizabeth Drew and George Williamson express the more prevalent view of the scene as one of emotional paralysis and sexual failure. Grover Smith describes it as the failure to respond with the appropriate word required in ritual initiation: "Evidently he has merely stood agape while she, bearing the sexual symbol--the spike-shaped blossoms representing the slain god Hyacinth of The Golden Bough--has awaited the word he cannot utter." Helen Gardner, in The Art of T. S. Eliot, argues that the response is ambiguously one of ecstasy and terror: "the terror in the moment of ecstasy in love, when love passes beyond its object and seems for a moment held in a kind of silence that seems outside time"; a feeling more succinctly expressed by Yeats' oxymoron, "a terrible beauty."

[61] Vickery, p. 250.

[62] Vickery, p. 252.

[63] Vickery, p. 250.

[64] Vickery refers to Eliot's statement that "the love of man and woman (or for that matter of man and man) is only explained and made reasonable by the higher love, or else is simply the coupling of animals." T. S. Eliot, "Dante," Selected Essays (1932; rpt. New York: Harcourt,

Brace & Co., 1950), pp. 234-35; hereafter cited as SE.

[65] Vickery, p. 251.

[66] The fact that "Hyacinths" and "hyacinth girl" are written in higher and lower case letters may reflect the "higher love" (Hyacinthus-Apollo) or greater mysteries of the male and the "lower," human love or lesser mysteries of the female.

[67] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," SE, p. 11.

[68] Vickery, p. 253.

[69] Smith, p. 72.

[70] *The Oxford English Dictionary* indicates the derivation of the term "Belladonna": "the specific name of the Deadly Nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*) . . . so called because the Italian ladies make a cosmetic from the juice [of this plant]."

[71] See Footnote 60.

[72] T. S. Eliot, "The Golden Ass of Apuleius," *Dial*, 85 (Sept. 1928), 256.

[73] Helen H. Bacon, "The Sibyl on the Bottle," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, 34, No. 2 (Spring 1958), 262-76.

[74] Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths*, I (1960; rpt. New York: Penguin Books, 1980), p. 71; hereafter cited as GM.

[75] Weston, p. 36.

[76] Vickery, p. 255.

[77] Weston, p. 169.

[78] Weston, p. 137.

[79] Vickery, p. 253.

[80] Maud Bodkin, *Archetypal Patterns in Poetry* (London, 1934; rpt. New York: Vintage Books, 1961), p. 165.

[81] Vickery, p. 254.

[82] Smith, p. 78.

[83] Smith, p. 78.

[84] Smith, p. 69.

[85] Vickery, p. 259.

[86] Vickery, p. 259.

[87] Drew, p. 75.

[88] A. D. Moody, Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1979), p. 53; hereafter cited as TSEP.

[89] P. W. Martin, Experiment in Depth (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1955), p. 95.

[90] Martin, p. 95.

[91] Martin, p. 98.

[92] Martin, p. 104.

[93] Martin, p. 104.

[94] Martin, p. 99.

[95] Gordon, p. 105.

[96] C. G. Jung, Psychology of the Unconscious (1916; rpt. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Co., 1947), pp. 251-63.

[97] Bodkin, p. 171; see also T. S. Eliot, "Dante," SE, pp. 234-35.

[98] Bodkin, p. 172.

[99] Drew, p. 83.

[100] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," SE, p. 6.

[101] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," SE, p. 6.

[102] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," SE, p. 4.

[103] Brian M. Fagan, People of the Earth (1974; rpt. Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1980), pp. 106-7.

Chapter II

[1] T. S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth," in Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot, ed. Frank Kermode (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 177.

[2] T. S. Eliot, "The Romantic Englishman, the Comic Spirit, and the Function of Criticism," Tyro, 1 (Spring 1921), 4.

[3] Eliot, "The Romantic Englishman, the Comic Spirit, and the Function of Criticism," p. 4.

[4] Gareth Reeves, "The Obstetrics of The Waste Land," Critical Quarterly, 17 (Spring 1975), 33-53.

[5] Arthur Sampley, "The Woman Who Wasn't There: Lacuna in T. S. Eliot," Critical Quarterly, 67 (1968), pp. 603-10.

[6] Esther M. Harding, Woman's Mysteries (London: Longmans, 1935), pp. 297-99.

[7] Genevieve Foster, "The Archetypal Imagery of T. S. Eliot," PMLA (June, 1945), pp. 567-85.

[8] Drew, p. 72.

[9] Vickery, p. 247.

[10] Smith, p. 84.

[11] Jung, p. 244.

[12] Cleanth Brooks, "The Waste Land: Critique of the Myth," in A Collection of Critical Essays on "The Waste Land," ed. Jay Martin (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 71.

[13] Brooks, p. 68.

[14] Smith, p. 86.

[15] Knight, p. 32.

[16] Cirlot, p. 356.

[17] Grover Smith, "T. S. Eliot's Lady of the Rocks," pp. 123-24. "This is most clearly true of 'La Gioconda,'" he notes, "who resembles Belladonna in dangerousness."

[18] Knight, p. 38.

[19] Walter Pater, The Renaissance, ed. Donald L. Hill (London, 1893; rpt. Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1980), pp. 98-99.

[20] T. S. Eliot, "The Golden Ass of Apuleius," p. 256.

[21] Apuleius quoted in Robert Graves, The White Goddess (1961; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1981), p. 73; hereafter cited as WG.

[22] Graves, WG, p. 70.

[23] Graves, WG, p. 70.

[24] Graves, WG, p. 70. "I write of her as the White Goddess," he says, "because white is her principal color. . . ."

[25] The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature tells us that Milton confuses the Fates and the Furies in "Lycidas."

[26] Graves, WG, p. 71.

[27] Robert Graves, GM, p. 72.

[28] Encyclopedia Britannica offers an account of the planet, Venus, that corresponds closely to the description of the queen's boudoir with its flames and smoke, burnished glow, thickly perfumed air and reflecting or refracting surfaces of ivory, glass, copper and stone: "[a]stonishingly hot, with an oppressively dense atmosphere containing corrosive gases with a surface glowing dimly by its own red heat and characterized by bizarre optical refraction effects, Venus (curiously identified in ancient literature with Lucifer) seems very much like the classical view of Hell."

[29] Antony and Cleopatra, II,2,192-93.

[30] Antony and Cleopatra, II,2,236-37.

[31] Cirlot, p. 347.

[32] A. D. Moody, "'To fill all the desert with inviolable voice,'" in "The Wasteland in Different Voices, ed. A. D. Moody (London: Edward Arnold, 1974), p. 54.

[33] Milton is quoted and interpreted in Bodkin's Archetypal Patterns in Poetry, p. 164.

[34] Bodkin, p. 163.

[35] Cymbeline, II,2,44-46.

[36] Ovid, Metamorphoses, trans. Mary M. Innes (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), pp. 146-47.

[37] Herbert Knust, "Sweeney among the Birds and Brutes," Arcadia, 2 (1967), 204-17.

[38] Eliot subtitles "Sweeney Agonistes" as an "Aristophanic Melodrama."

[39] Russell Kirk, Eliot and His Age: T. S. Eliot's Moral Imagination in the Twentieth Century (New York: Random House, 1971), p. 86.

[40] T. S. Eliot, "Dante," SE, p. 223.

[41] Smith, p. 90.

[42] Smith, p. 82.

[43] Vickery, p. 259.

[44] Smith, p. 80.

[45] Graves, WG, p. 70.

[46] T. S. Eliot, "Thomas Middleton," For Lancelot Andrewes, Essays on Style and Order (1928; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1970), p. 83; hereafter cited as FLA.

[47] T. S. Eliot, "Thomas Middleton," FLA, pp. 82-83.

[48] Gordon, p. 98.

[49] T. S. Eliot, "Baudelaire," SE, p. 380.

[50] The Oxford English Dictionary suggests that "hell-cat" derives from Hecate, the "triple face" of Hades to which Eliot alludes in "Death by Water" in the manuscript.

[51] T. S. Eliot, "Baudelaire," SE, p. 380.

[52] See Chapter IV of this thesis, pp. 154-55.

[53] Smith, p. 83.

[54] Cymbeline, II,5,19-28.

[55] Anne C. Bolgan, what the thunder really said (Montreal: McGill, 1973), p. 2.

[56] Smith, p. 81.

[57] Moody, p. 86.

[58] Grover Smith writes: "Her nervous peevishness at the noise of the wind evokes in his mind the image of 'rats' alley/ Where the dead men lost their bones,' for it was with a noise and shaking, and with a blast of wind, that the dead in Ezekiel's valley of dry bones received the breath of life and stood upon their feet," p. 81.

[59] See Chapter IV of this thesis, p. 154.

[60] Ecclesiastes, 2:17, 7:26. See Chapter IV of this thesis, p. 132.

[61] T. S. Eliot, On Poetry and Poets (1957; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1979), p. 89.

[62] Ecclesiastes, 7:26.

[63] Lyndall Gordon, p. 112. She offers an interpretation of the sirens passage: ". . . the fisherman sees three crosses and, in front of them, three women with foaming hair, singing a siren's song. Prufrock longs for mermaids to sing to him; Londoners are charmed by the Thames-daughters' 'la la' to their senses; but the fisherman coolly rejects them. He sees how their siren's song blends with the 'illimitable scream' of the whole natural world. At the height of the storm, he leaps to the notion that the shrill world with its provocative women is simply an illusion. . . ."

[64] James T. Bratcher, "Prufrock and the Mermaids Reviewed," Descant, 6, No. 3 (Spring, 1962), pp. 13-17.

[65] Bratcher, pp. 13-17.

[66] Moody, "To fill all the desert with inviolable voice," p. 55.

[67] Bolgan, p. 2.

[68] Drew, p. 78.

[69] Gordon, p. 97. She quotes a letter quoted, in turn, by E. Martin Brown in The Making of T. S. Eliot's Plays (London: C.U.P., 1970), pp. 106-8.

[70] Moody, p. 105. The translation is Ezra Pound's from Spirit of Romance, 1952, pp. 18-21.

[71] Ecclesiastes, 12:4.

Chapter III

[1] T. S. Eliot, "Baudelaire," SE, p. 381.

[2] T. S. Eliot, Poems Written in Early Youth (London: Faber, 1967), p. 26.

[3] Gordon, p. 29. She notes that Eliot had studied, at Harvard, "the generation of Freud, Durkheim, Bergson, Croce, William James" and "of that generation, Sir James Frazer, in particular, was to interest Eliot as an elucidator of the 'obscurities of the soul.'"

[4] Frazer, I, 9, 234.

[5] T. S. Eliot, Poems Written in Early Youth, p. 26.

[6] Gordon, p. 25.

[7] Gordon, p. 28.

[8] Gordon, p. 25. She quotes from Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (1961).

[9] Bolgan, p. 44.

[10] Robert H. Canary, T. S. Eliot, The Poet and His Critics (Chicago: American Library Association, 1982), p. 22. "Despite his knowledge of spirited and intelligent women," writes Canary, "Eliot freely indulges in stereotypes of woman as mindless, the basic forms being the dark and dangerous enchantress and the pale, spiritual ideal."

[11] Gordon, p. 27 ("Prufrock" was written in this early period as well).

[12] Gordon, p. 26.

[13] Gordon, p. 26.

[14] Jane Harrison, Themis (1912; rpt. London: Merlin Press, 1977), p. 389.

[15] Gordon, p. 29.

[16] Gordon, p. 30.

[17] T. S. Eliot, To Criticize the Critic (1965; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1978), p. 22.

[18] W. E. Collin observes that in Eliot's poetry, "[W]oman, the emancipated woman of [Eliot's] own time, is still, "l'Eternel Madame" of Corbière and Laforgue and he can only speak of her ironically. W. E. Collin, The White Savannahs (Toronto: Macmillan, 1936), p. 198. All quotations of Symbolist poetry in this chapter are taken from An Anthology, French Symbolist Poetry, trans. and eds. John P. Houston and Mona T. Houston (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1980).

[19] See Edward J. H. Greene, T. S. Eliot et la France (Paris: Editions Contemporaines) for a comprehensive examination of Baudelairean echoes in The Waste Land.

[20] Nicole Ward, "'Fourmillante Cité': Baudelaire and The Waste Land," in "The Waste Land" in Different Voices, p. 90.

[21] Ward, p. 91.

[22] Frazer, II, 5, 289-91. Frazer's description of the ritual sacrifice to the goddess of love and fertility is no less horrifying than Baudelaire's description of love-making. In the section entitled, "Human Representatives of Attis," Frazer writes: "We may conjecture than in old days the priest who bore the name and played the part of Attis at the spring festival of Cybele was regularly hanged or otherwise slain upon the sacred tree. . . ." And he discusses this phenomenon as it occurred,

universally, throughout the ancient world. "The Bagobos of Mindanao, one of the Philippine Islands," he continues,

> used annually to sacrifice human victims for the good of the crops in a similar way. Early in December, when the constellation of Orion appeared . . . the victim was led to a great tree in the forest; there he was tied with his back to the tree and his arms stretched high above his head. . . . While he thus hung by the arms, he was slain by a spear thrust through his body at the level of his armpits. Afterwards, the body was cut clean through the middle at the waist, and the upper part was apparently allowed to dangle for a little from the tree, while the under part wallowed in blood on the ground. The two portions were finally cast into a shallow trench beside the tree.

[23] R. Graves, *GM*, I, p. 71.

[24] Robert Graves points out that the Convent of the Sacred Heart is situated in one of New York's red-light districts; the ironical location of this convent may be reflected in the image of a "heart of light" engulfed in a dark underworld of back alleys and brothels (such as appears in "The Burial of the Dead" in the drafts). R. Graves, "Sweeney among the Blackbirds," *The Texas Quarterly*, 1, No. 1 (1958), 83-102, p. 95.

[25] Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p. 381.

[26] Gordon, p. 76.

[27] Because this text is particularly opaque, an English translation is provided:

> As from a green zinc coffin, a woman's head with brown hair heavily pomaded rises out of an old bath, slowly and stupidly, with its bald patches pretty clumsily hidden;
>
> then the fat greyish neck, and the broad and protuberant shoulder-blades; the short back with its hollows and bulges; then the curves of the buttocks seem to soar; the lard beneath the skin appears as flat flakes;
>
> the spine's rather red; and the whole thing has a smell which is strangely disgusting; one notices especially oddities which should be studied with a lens. . . .

Arthur Rimbaud, *Collected Poems*, trans. and ed. Oliver Bernard (New York: Penguin Books, 1962), p. 87.

[28] Charles Baudelaire, *Oeuvres Complètes* (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1962), p. 1181; hereafter cited as *OC*.

[29] Baudelaire, *OC*, p. 1188.

[30] Baudelaire, *OC*, pp. 1187-88.

[31] Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar, The Madwoman in the Attic, The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination (London: Yale Univ. Press, 1979), p. 32.

[32] Gilbert and Gubar, p. 31.

[33] Reeves, p. 36.

[34] Reeves, p. 39.

[35] T. S. Eliot, "Arnold and Pater," SE, pp. 392-93.

[36] Baudelaire, OC, p. 1272. Elsewhere in his Journaux Intimes, Baudelaire writes, "l'eternelle Vénus (caprice, hystérie, fantasie) est une des formes séduisantes du Diable" (p. 1288).

[37] Baudelaire, OC, p. 1183.

[38] T. S. Eliot, "Baudelaire," SE, p. 378.

[39] Baudelaire, "Le Voyage," p. 126.

[40] Aubrey Beardsley, The Collected Drawings, ed. Bruce S. Harris (New York: Bounty Books, 1967), pp. 58-59.

[41] Emile Zola, Nana, trans. George Holder (New York: Penguin Books, 1977). An unexpurgated edition in the French could not be found.

[42] Frazer, II, 1, 263.

Chapter IV

[1] Ecclesiastes, 1:2, 1:3, 1:4, 1:7, 1:14.

[2] Ezekiel, 1:20, 1:21.

[3] T. S. Eliot, "Dante," SE, p. 234.

[4] John Donne, "The Relique," in Seventeenth-Century Prose and Poetry, eds. Alexander M. Witherspoon and Frank J. Warnke (1946; rpt. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1963), p. 749.

[5] Ecclesiastes, 7:26-28.

[6] Ecclesiastes, 12:5, 12:7.

[7] Ecclesiastes, 8:13.

[8] Job, 8:9.

[9] Smith, p. 73.

[10] Smith, p. 74.

[11] Revelation, 2:20.

[12] Revelation, 1:11. The other cities include Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea.

[13] Revelation, 17:1, 17:4.

[14] Revelation, 17:6.

[15] Revelation, 18:2.

[16] Gordon, p. 39.

[17] Frazer, II, 6, 298-300.

[18] Frazer, II, 6, 300.

[19] Frazer, II, 6, 301.

[20] Moody, p. 83. Eliot observes in an essay written at Harvard c. 1913-14 on "Is a science of religion possible?--the problem of interpretation" that it was simply Frazer's rationalist interpretation to regard them as fertility cults.

[21] Gordon, p. 58.

[22] S. E. Hyman, The Tangled Bank, Darwin, Marx, Frazer and Freud as Imaginative Writers (1959; rpt. New York: Atheneum, 1974), pp. 263-64.

[23] T. S. Eliot, "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," SE, p. 112.

[24] Gordon, pp. 102-3.

[25] Joseph Campbell in the "Introduction" to J. J. Bachofen, Myth, Religion and Mother Right (Stuttgart, 1861; rpt. Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1967), trans. Ralph Manheim, pp. liv-lv.

[26] Bachofen, p. 87.

[27] Bachofen, p. 79.

[28] Revelation, 17:5.

[29] Ecclesiastes, 8:8.

[30] Ecclesiastes, 11:5.

[31] Vickery, p. 277.

[32] Jane Harrison, *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (Cambridge, 1921; rpt. London: Merlin Press, 1980), p. 285.

[33] W. F. Jackson Knight identifies a "male principle" of firmness and control in opposition to a "female principle" of flexibility and cooperation, which he discerns in classical literature. In Eliot's poetry only the "masculine principle" appears and in images such as (Knight quotes Eliot): "'stone, bronze, stone steel, oakleaves, stone, horse's heels'" and "'in the hands quiet over the horse's neck.'" "The male principle," Knight adds, "is seen in Fascism now" (p. 170).

[34] Bachofen, p. 90.

[35] Eliot's caricature of the ancient priestess in the figure of modern, decadent females, with foreign and/or aristocratic names, bears some resemblance to D. H. Lawrence's description of Hermione Roddice in *Women in Love* (1921). She descends from the old aristocracy which (as Veblen explains in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*) derives its prestige and power from the ancient priesthood. Lawrence, like Eliot, figures decadence in a female figure; she, also, signifies the "last fingers of leaf" on the old great tree of knowledge--"She was a priestess without belief, without conviction, suckled in a creed outworn, and condemned to the reiteration of mysteries that were not divine to her. Yet there was no escape. She was a leaf upon a dying tree. What help was there then, but to fight still for the old, withered truths, to die for the old, outworn belief, to be a sacred and inviolate priestess of desecrated mysteries? . . . she was a leaf of the old great tree of knowledge that was withering now" (p. 329). It is not only the decadence of female mysteries that Lawrence presents, but a hatred of the Great Mother herself. Like Eliot's "personage" (Gerontion/Tiresias) the central character of *Women in Love* (Rupert Birkin) "had a *horror* of the Magna Mater, she was detestable" (my italics). D. H. Lawrence, *Women in Love* (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), pp. 329, 224.

[36] Bachofen, p. 144.

[37] Bachofen, p. 118. "The ancients," he writes, "looked on Augustus, the adoptive son who avenged the death of his spiritual father, as a second Orestes, and regarded his reign as the dawn of a new Apollonian era."

[38] Bachofen, p. 100.

[39] Frazer tells us that Dido is an avatar of Astarte, a forerunner of Cybele in Carthage. Frazer, I, 5, 114.

[40] Bachofen, p. 84.

[41] Bachofen, p. 97.

[42] Bachofen, p. 119.

[43] Gordon locates the allusion, here, to "Newman's sermon on Divine Calls, quoted in the Apologia Pro Vita Sua, ed. M. J. Svaglie (Oxford: Clarendon, 1967), p. 111: "'Let us beg and pray Him day by day to reveal Himself to our souls more fully, to quicken our senses, to give us sight and hearing, taste and touch of the world to come'" (p. 103, n.).

[44] Harrison, Themis, p. 530.

[45] F. M. Cornford, From Religion to Philosophy, A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation (London, 1912; rpt. N.J.: Humanities Press, 1980), pp. 20-21.

[46] Richard Lattimore offers this interpretation in the "Introduction" to his translation of Aeschylus, Oresteia (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1953).

[47] Bachofen, p. 110.

Conclusion

[1] T. S. Eliot, "Baudelaire in Our Time," FLA, p. 75.

[2] T. S. Eliot, "Cyril Tourneur," SE, p. 166.

[3] T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," SE, p. 8.

[4] Moody, TSEP, p. 110.

[5] Smith, p. 94. He also suggests referring to Wilkie Collins, The Woman in White, Part II, Chap. 5, for an account of the hooded figure.

[6] Gordon, p. 97.

[7] Moody, TSEP, p. 104.

[8] Moody, TSEP, p. 104.

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